CHALLENGES OF LOCALIZATION OF THE POLICY FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
The study examines the challenges of localization of the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism in Plateau state. The paper noted that violent extremism is fundamentally, repudiations of democratic values of tolerance, respect, inclusion and diversity. In Nigeria, threats from violent extremism are targeted against individuals, groups and the state. These threats have gravely undermined economic development, social progress, political stability, national and human security, and peaceful coexistence in the country. The theoretical framework for this study is the Context, Input, Process, Product (CIPP) Evaluation Model. Questionnaires and in-depth interview were used to collect the data for this study. Simple descriptive statistics presented in tables using frequency and percentages were used to analyse the quantitative data collected in the study. While, in-depth interview summaries were used to analyse the qualitative data. The Findings show that: the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism is a product that went through several processes and stakeholders. But essentially, it contains a strategic vision Nigeria holds for preventing violent extremism, which is a product of research, global practices and knowledge of the root causes of violent extremism. There is low awareness of the level of localization and implementation of the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism in Plateau state. The challenges of the localizing and implementing the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism in Plateau state are largely due to lack of coordination, lack of awareness, lack of effectiveness, trust gap between government and citizens. The paper recommended that: effective national coordination is urgently needed to localize the policy at the grassroots. While, different civil society organizations should not work at cross-purposes but be coordinated in their activities toward preventing violent extremism in Plateau State.

Introduction

Violent extremism is fundamentally, repudiations of democratic values of tolerance, respect, inclusion and diversity in any nation (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), 2019). In this twenty first century, Nigeria is currently facing serious threats from violent extremism targeted against individuals, groups and the state. These threats have gravely undermined economic development, social progress, political stability, national and human security, and peaceful coexistence in the country. The activities of violent extremist individuals and groups have claimed thousands of innocent lives, destroyed private properties and public facilities worth billions of Naira, and forced millions of citizens to flee their homes and communities, thereby created a huge population of internally displaced persons and refugees (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2017). Following the threats posed by violent extremism and the continuous ranking of Nigeria as number 3 after Afghanistan and Iraq in the Global Terrorism Index (Olalekan, 2021). The United Nations, therefore, directed countries to develop "Plan of Action" in 2015 and, the government of Nigeria introduced the national framework and national action plan in 2017 and embarked on its adaptation to cater for the needs of its people to prevent and counter violent extremism as well as build safer and more resilient communities in Nigeria.

Plateau state, like many other states in Nigeria, has experienced activities of violent extremists that have become alarmingly widespread, often in partnership with organized crime. According to Alexandre et al (2022) that organized crime have been identified as among a number of factors contributing to Nigeria's increasing instability, the nature of the role played by crime in shaping Nigeria's security situation is often oversimplified. These organized crimes include rural banditry and cattle-rustling, herders-farmers clashes, kidnapping for ransom, and ethno-religious violent clashes. To Olalekan (2021) the most serious threat of violent extremism has come from the insurgency of the proscribed Boko Haram terrorists, Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Ansaru which have ravaged so many communities in the north-eastern parts of Nigeria, and north central as well and in particular Plateau state.

Higazi (2011) narrated that Plateau state is the main site of ethnic and religious violence in northern Nigeria. The past decade has seen recurrent crises across the state, in urban and rural areas. Thousands of lives have been lost in these violent conflicts, there has been extensive damage to property, and the development prospects of the state have been set back. The violence has mainly been along religious lines, between Muslims and Christians, but ethnicity also has a central role in the conflicts and there are considerable political interests at stake. Episodes of mass killing and destruction have occurred in Jos in 2001, 2002, 2008 and 2010. The violence has also affected other parts of the high Plateau, in rural areas outside of Jos – particularly in 2001-2002 and 2010, when hundreds of people were killed in Yelwa-Shendam, in villages, in their fields, or while tending cattle. There have been massacres in the old mining settlements on the Plateau, notably in 2001 and 2010. In rural areas there has also been widespread violence between Berom farmers and Fulani pastoralists (Higazi, 2011). Today, the violence has shifted to Mangu, Bokkos and Barkin Ladi local government areas where citizens are been killed, communities destroyed and created a huge number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The dynamic nature of this violence has seen traditional rulers, high profile politicians and citizens being kidnapped and ransom paid before they are being released and in some cases killed.

The activities of violent extremists' groups in Plateau state has been in the increase in recent times and the kinetic efforts by the military-security operatives has not been able to quell the crises. Communities are being razed down as a result of the activities of these violent extremists and people are continually been displaced. Farming activities are affected as well because farmers cannot access their farms. However, contrary to expectation, the nation is still grappling with the menace six years after the policy localization. Instead of declining, violent extremism influence and emerged forms have extended to almost all parts of the country (Olalekan, 2021).

Against this backdrop, the concern of this research is to examine the challenges of the localization of the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism in Plateau state.

Statement of the Problem

Undermining the common humanity, violent extremism is inherently global. It is driven by a

mixture of personal, societal and ideational factors whose manifestations vary from one individual to the next. Violent extremism has affected different societies during different eras and in different regions of the world. Violent extremism and activities of violent extremists in Plateau state has been on the increase over the years. Since the return to civilian rule in 1999, the intensity and virulence of the conflict within the Nigerian landscape has regularly punctuated attempts to engender democracy and the rule of law. Plateau state and particularly the capital Jos represent one of the most volatile of these violent theatres of conflict. Since September 2001, Jos and its environs have witnessed incessant episodes of sectarian violence. In November 2008, there was renewed violence in Jos during local government elections in which at least 800 people were killed. The conflict was not resolved and more violence broke out in January 2010, the worst affected areas are in the rural areas on the edge of Jos (Jimam, 2015). Today, most of the local government areas in the state are experiencing serious threats from activities of violent extremists especially Mangu, Bokkos and Barkin Ladi local government areas at this time.

The severity of the violence in 2010 in the rural hinterland of Jos, in places like Kuru and Dogo Nahawa where people were killed and the gory pictures shown on the pages of newspapers left many thinking whether the perpetrators don't fear God. This act requires serious investigations in which those responsible are held to account, but very little has been achieved. According to Plateau State Peace Building Agency (PPBA) (2018) that between 2001 and 2015 the number of people killed in ethno-religious crisis and other forms of armed attacks in Plateau state is estimated to be slightly over 7,000. Many people lost their homes and livelihoods and several communities were uprooted as a result of violent attacks in different communities across the state. Although, there have been military-security operatives operations in Plateau state like Operation Safe Haven to address the incessant activities of violent extremists, but these operations have yet to have significant effect on preventing violent extremism in communities.

However, the negative effect of this violent extremism has made Nigerian government to seek for solution on how to combat the menace through the policy framework and national action plan for preventing and countering violent extremism. The plan of action calls for a comprehensive approach encompassing not only essential security-based counter-terrorism measures but also systematic preventive steps to address the underlying conditions that drive individuals to radicalize and join violent extremist groups (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2017).

Research Objective

The central objective of this paper was to discuss the challenges of the localization of the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism in Plateau state. In order to achieve this objective, the following specific objectives would be pursued. They are:

i. To determine the localization and implementation of the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism in Plateau state.

ii. To determine the challenges of the localization and implementation of the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism in Plateau state.

Conceptual Clarification

Policy Framework and Action Plan

The policy framework and national action plan for preventing and countering violent extremism in Nigeria was designed to close the gap of peace, security and development in Nigeria. The Policy Framework is a complementary, whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach for addressing threats posed by violent extremist groups. Through existing and new platforms, the framework seeks to build capacity, improve coordination, strengthen the justice system and by integrating strategic communication, provide alternative narratives to violent extremism (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2017).

According to Khalid (2022) national action plans provide a good basis for policy interventions and the UN Secretary-General's 2016 Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism recommends that each Member State should consider developing a national plan of action to prevent violent extremism which sets national priorities for addressing the local drivers of violent extremism. He further stated

that by the end of 2019, more than a dozen governments had published national action plans including Albania, Burkina Faso, Denmark, Finland, France, Kenya, Kosovo, Mali, Montenegro, Morocco, Nigeria, Norway, Somalia and Switzerland.

The National Security Adviser Babagana Mungonu as cited in Federal Government of Nigeria (2017) stated that the policy framework will strengthen ongoing efforts in the handling of persons associated with violent extremism, collaborate with Civil Society in community engagement and resilience building, strategic communication activities and effective prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremist offenders. It will also ensure that preventing and countering violent extremism is institutionalized and mainstreamed into mandates of Ministries, Departments and Agencies of Governments, including at States and Local levels. The main goal is to partner for safer and resilient communities that are less vulnerable to violent extremism and that can recover from the consequence of violence.

Violence

The term "violence" according to Theophilus, Adesoji and Andrew (2021) is defined as political, ethnic or religious expression by organized groups or radicalized individuals against targets of interest. Violent groups or initiatives can be local, nationalistic, or transnational in nature.

Violence is a way of expressing disaffection with what political systems and institutions have failed to address. This could include lack of space for equal and representative participation, lack of social services, government repression, parallel external interests, economic marginalization, and other unmet needs. Most individuals or groups involved in violence lack a platform in society or have been suppressed over time and decide to do something abnormal to get attention. The actions of violent groups and individuals always go beyond acceptable legal and societal laws and norms. Violent groups and individuals use indiscriminate and disproportionate force against targets which creates insecurity and fear. Furthermore, in considering the role of external interests in beginning and sustaining violence, violence is defined as the invasion of territories by foreigners and all forms of mistreatment of their people: physical violence, rape, forced labor, deportations, denial of medical care, torture and killing as a warning to captives who refuse to comply. In many cases, violence becomes business instead of a security challenge as it creates markets for arms through cash payments and exchange for commodities such as oil, gas, gold and diamonds (Theophilus, Adesoji & Andrew, 2021).

Violent Extremism

The term violent extremism is a matter of perception. An individual's perception of injustice leads them down the path towards violence and in Plateau state that perception is often relative deprivation the belief that you are not getting what you deserve and it is also a generational event. Its drivers are in many ways unique to youth of a particular age, suffering from a crisis of identity but maintaining a powerful desire to reshape the world. While structural changes to the economy and local governance may make it more inclusive, radicalization will likely not cease until individual motivations are addressed (Nizar, Roland & Nabil, 2019). Violent extremism continues to pose fundamental threats to national security and violent extremism presents a critical threat (Sabastien & David, 2019).

The term "violent extremism" is rarely defined but generally refers to acts of violence that are justified by or associated with an extremist religious, social, or political ideology. The concept of violent extremism is broader and more expansive than terrorism, because it accommodates any kind of violence, as long as its motivation is deemed extremist (OSCE, 2021). According to William, Stijn and Hans (2021) the concept of "violent extremism" tends toward a more behavioral than idealistic definition, in that it places focus on violence as a means, rather than the holding of extreme views themselves in other words, it would be possible to hold "extreme views" in that they are in opposition to societal values, but not to be a "violent extremist". Is an individual's or group's violent tendency because of sticking to an unconventional world view or radical ideology. Elibiary (2015) provides four (4) different manifestations of violent extremism: (1) violent extremism is marked by a considerable departure from the usual or traditional; (2) it involves tending or disposed to make extreme changes in existing views, habits, conditions, or

institutions; (3) of, relating to, or constituting a political group associated with views, practices, and policies of extreme change; and (4) advocating extreme measures to retain or restore an apolitical state of affairs (the radical right).

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopted the Context, Input, Process, Product (CIPP) Evaluation Model. This model was designed by Stufflebeam (2003). The Context, Input, Process, Product (CIPP) Evaluation Model is a framework for guiding evaluations of programmes (policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism), projects, personnel, products, institutions, and evaluation systems. It is designed to assist administrators in making informed decisions. CIPP is a popular evaluation approach in educational settings. The approach was developed in the late 1960s which it seeks to improve and achieve accountability in programmes through a "learning-by-doing" approach. Its core concepts are context, input, process, and product evaluation, with the intention of not to prove, but rather improve, the programme itself. An evaluation following the CIPP model may include a context, input, process, or product evaluation, or a combination of these elements. In the model, very useful approach to educational evaluation is the Context, Input, Process, Product (CIPP) approach. Stufflebeam recognized the shortcomings of available evaluation approaches and so worked to expand and systemize thinking about administrative polices of the decision making (Stufflebeam, 2003).

CIPP appears as if the approach was only directed by 'experts' who may be regarded as 'outsiders' for a particular programme to be evaluated, but Stufflebeam had insisted that the CIPP Model is a comprehensive framework for guiding formative and summative evaluations of projects, programmes, personnel, products, institutions, and systems, the model has been configured for use both for internal evaluations conducted by organizations' evaluators as well as for self-evaluations conducted by project teams or individual service providers, and for contracted or mandate external evaluations.

CIPP model is particularly important for the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism evaluation in which the outcome is reported to decision makers. In the context of the CIPP approach, programme evaluation implies the systematic collection of information (data) about the activities, characteristics and outcome of policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism for use by specific people to reduce uncertainties, improve effectiveness, and make decisions with regard to what those programmes are doing and affecting. Stufflebeam (2003) sees evaluation's purposes as establishing and providing useful information for fudging decision alternatives, assisting audience to judge and improve the worth of some educational programme or object, and assisting the improvement of policies and programmes with regard to goals, plans, outcomes and actions.

Research Methodology

The data used for this study were from secondary sources, questionnaires and in-depth interview. Simple descriptive statistics presented in tables using frequency and percentages were used to analyse the quantitative data collected in the study. While, in-depth interview summaries were used to analyse the qualitative data. The data obtained provided for the analysis related to the challenges of localization and implementation of the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism in Plateau state.

Findings

The Localization of the Policy Framework and National Action Plan for Preventing Violent Extremism

The policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism is not wholly different from any other policy framework in terms of focus and the need to bridge a gap in peace, security and development (Olalekan, 2021). But according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2017) that the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism is a product that went through several processes and stakeholders. But essentially, it contains a strategic vision Nigeria holds for preventing violent extremism, which is a product of research, global practices and knowledge of the root causes of violent extremism. Nigeria has come to understand that violent extremism is a constant phenomenon that requires being

wholly addressed not only through kinetic but also non-kinetic approaches. Different forms of the threat that might emerge were anticipated to be addressed by appropriate measures through the policy framework.

The National Security Adviser Babagana Mungonu as cited in Federal Government Nigeria (2017) stated that the policy framework will strengthen ongoing efforts in the handling of persons associated with violent extremism, collaborate with Civil Society in community engagement and resilience building, strategic communication activities and effective prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremist offenders. He further stated that the main goal is to partner for safer and resilient communities that are less vulnerable to violent extremism and that can recover from the consequence of violence.

The Federal Government of Nigeria (2017) stated that the two factors that lead to participation in, or support for violent extremism in Nigeria are the push and pull factors. They further stated that the push factors are the structural conditions that make an environment more conducive to the growth of violent extremism, such as unemployment, poverty, inequality, social exclusion, health, other socio-economic factors (although not in isolation) and the role of governance. While, the pull factors are factors that facilitate mobilization of individuals and groups to extreme positions/ideologies. The document further stated that these factors relate to the existence of grievance (a vulnerability that has to be mobilized), a fact of belonging to a group or having an ego or status, emergence of a charismatic leader (online or offline who mobilizes) and tendency for simplified answers to complex issues (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2017).

The core objectives of the policy framework and national action plan are to:

i. Institutionalize, mainstream and coordinate PCVE programmes at national, state and local levels;

ii. Strengthen accessible justice system and respect for human rights and rule of law;

iii. Enhance capacity of individuals/communities to prevent and counter violent extremism; and recover from violent occurrences;

iv. Institutionalize, mainstream and integrate strategic communication in PCVE programmes at all levels.

The policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism envisages that the realization of the core objectives will be pursued in ways that are consistent with the provisions of the Constitution, and the relevant policy and legal instruments, as well as international norms and good practices which are built on the paradigm shift in Nigeria's conception of its national security from a state-centred to a people-centred approach. This policy framework anticipates that all tiers of government in Nigeria will play significant roles in preventing and countering violent extremism (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2017). Therefore, this study seeks to examine the role Plateau state played in preventing violent extremism as stipulated in the policy framework and national action plan.

Table 1 Level of Community Awareness of the localization and Implementation of the Policy Framework and National Action Plan for Preventing Violent Extremism in Plateau State

Respondents Level of Awareness	Frequency	Valid Percent
Yes	54	24
No	111	48
Do Not Know	64	28

***Source**: Field Survey, 2023*

Table 1 above shows that 24% of the respondents said yes the awareness of the implementation of the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism in Plateau state is high while 48% of the respondents said no which constitute the majority and 28% said they do not know about the level of awareness of the localization and implementation of the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism in Plateau state. This has shown that majority of the respondents said they were not aware of the level of localization and of the

policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism in Plateau state.

The programme officer of Plateau Peace Building Agency was asked about the level of community awareness of the localization and implementation of the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism in Plateau state. His response was that:

> Even though as an expert, I am aware of the policy framework for preventing and countering violent extremism in Nigeria. However, the level of awareness of the localization and implementation in the communities is low (interview, 2022).

This affirms the position of the Localize Direct (2020) that some state's security officials were not aware of the existence of the policy implementation framework and national action plan for preventing and countering violent extremism. Also, Olalekan (2021) stated that there was a trust gap between government and the citizens which were as a result of poor linkages between different levels of government and communities at the local levels. Such is the evidence associated with the localization of the implementation of the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism. He further stressed that it was made to look as if it is a top-down approach policy instead of bottom-up. Therefore, the policy framework and national action plan has not in any way reduced violent extremism in Plateau state.

Challenges of the Localized and implementation of the Policy Framework and National Action Plan for Preventing Violent Extremism

According to Olelakan (2021) that one would have thought that a nation that has been reeling from a violent extremism crisis for more than a decade now would have learned significant lessons to effectively localize the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism to the grassroots. Instead, its localization proved so challenging in the manner in which it is being implemented. There is no definitive framework as a baseline to analyze the effectiveness of policy implementation (Pradham, Su, Fu, Zhang & Yang, 2017).

Table 2 Challenges of Localizing and Implementing the Policy Framework and National Action Plan for Preventing Violent Extremism in Plateau State

Responses	Frequency	Valid Percent
Yes	91	41
No	44	20
Do Not Know	87	39
Total	**222**	**100**

***Source**: Field Survey, 2023*

The result as presented on table 2 above shows that 41% of the respondents said the document is facing some challenges. While, 20% said the document is not facing any challenge and 39% said they did not know whether the document is facing any challenges in its localization and implementation. Therefore, result has shown that the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism is facing some challenges ranging from corruption, followed by the challenge of intelligent sharing, lack of co-ordination, community rejection and lack of awareness in localizing and implementing the document. This is also evident in what Olalekan (2021) stated that lack of awareness has affected some interventions on preventing violent extremism such as integration programmes for the ex-combatants in their communities. Some communities are expressing resistance to the programme by their rejection of repentant militants. The community leader sometimes doublespeak, they tell you what you want to hear and when it comes to reintegration, they acted as if they did not want the ex-militants to come back. This is because they see no reason why they should open their arms to the perpetrators and killers of their kith and kin while the victims or relations are not cared for or compensated by the government (Olalekan, 2021).

The research found that the policy framework and national action plan was not known to many in plateau state because it has not been stepped down at the state and local government levels and the awareness gap is real and it manifestation is evident in different forms. The Partnership Against Violence Extremism (PAVE) which was set-up and one of the civil society component of preventing and countering violent extremism in Nigeria that comprises of about 70 civil society organizations has faced the challenge of coordinating these groups and even Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) was difficult due to differences and multiplicity of purposes. Likewise, Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) did not intervene in the coordination of rescued victims of the violent extremism like the Chibok and Dapchi school girls (Olalekan, 2021). In Plateau state, the challenges encountered on the implementation of the policy framework and action plan on preventing violent extremism were lack of community awareness, intelligent sharing, lack of co-ordination, and community rejection in implementing the document.

Also, there is a challenge of lack of symbiotic relationship between critical agencies fighting violent extremism according to security personnel who was interviewed. His response was that:

> The coordination challenges emanates from institutionalizing the document with Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), legislature, judiciary and others that are taken into consideration because of their critical roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the policy framework are not active in the mainstream of the policy implementation (Interview, 2022).

Another challenge is the inadequate legal framework to support preventing violent extremism efforts at the state and local government levels which is against what was spelt out in the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism that the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) is the coordinating office and is expected to get in touch with relevant parties that will ensure the success of localizing and implementing the policy (Olalekan, 2021).

Furthermore, an interview held with one of the senior security personnel in Jos, Plateau state and explained that the challenge of localizing the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism has to do with:

> The inadequate legal framework to support preventing violent extremism efforts at the state and local government levels which is against what was spelt out in the policy document that the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) is the coordinating office and is expected to get in touch with relevant parties that will ensure the success of localizing and implementing the policy (Interview, 2022).

According to the Comprehensive Report (2021) that, traditional, community and religious leaders were not being carried along in both programming and implementation of the policy. They further states that citizens are likely to support a policy if they are part of its development process. Therefore, localizing policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism could begin with the custodian of culture and representatives of the people. It is at the grassroots that traces of indoctrination and violent extremism originates.

Conclusion

This study has observed that after six years of its localization and implementation, the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism in Plateau state has a long way to prevent violent extremism and to build a safer and resilient communities. The challenges of the localizing and implementing the policy framework and national action plan

for preventing violent extremism in Plateau state are largely due to lack of coordination, lack of awareness, lack of effectiveness, trust gap between government and citizens. The increasing violent extremism in Plateau state has shown that the good idea to address the rising violent extremism through the policy framework and national action plan has not been taken seriously.

Consequently, there is still hope and a chance that the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism in Plateau state can be deliver on its expected goal. The policy framework, its strategic context and the presidential directive are clear and its national action plan is explicit and effective localization and implementation of the policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism is worth embarking on. Essentially, Office of the National Security Adviser should scale up its localization strategy by cascading its roadmap for sustainability of preventing violent extremism initiatives and interventions (Olalekan, 2021). The study concludes that the localization of policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism can be effectively fulfilled if there is greater community participation to mitigate violent extremism in Plateau state.

Recommendations

i. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proffered:

ii. It is highly recommended that all encompassing interventions to bring everyone on board to combat violent extremism should be emphasized.

iii. Also, effective national coordination is urgently needed to localize the policy at the grassroots. While, different civil society organizations should not work at cross-purposes but be coordinated in their activities toward preventing violent extremism in Plateau State.

iv. All stakeholders should adhere to sincerity and commitment to preventing violent extremism programmes and projects. This should be done by extending sensitization and advocacy programmes on policy framework and national action plan for preventing violent extremism to the grassroots.

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