LIBRARIES AS CATALYSTS FOR PROMOTING PEACE AND NATIONAL SECURITY FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Peace and national security in Nigeria have been disrupted severally as a result of political crises, youth restiveness, kidnapping, oil bunkering, agitation for resource control, Boko Haram, insurgency, banditry among others. The attendant effect is the destruction of lives and national resources. To a larger extent, it has brought serious setback to economic, social, political and technological development in the country. Libraries and librarians as custodial of information management and dissemination can contribute effectively toward attaining peace and national security for sustainable economic development .Using conceptual approach this paper examines the role of libraries and librarians in promoting peace and national security to create a level ground for economic activities to thrive in Nigeria, It discusses further how information dissemination, peace education and digital engagement can foster stability and economic growth. The objectives of the paper is to show that libraries and librarians can contribute effectively in the fight against terrorism through propaganda; to stress the need for rightful information provision as crucial tool in promoting peace and security in the country; to x-ray security challenges and its implication on sustainable economic development. It concludes by recommending appropriate measures to curb the menace of insecurity in the country.

Keywords: Librarians, Libraries, National Security, Peace, Sustainable Economic Development.

Introduction

There is no country of the world which can achieve greatness and development in an atmosphere of rancor and social stability. For Nigeria as a nation to develop economically, it calls for a holistic approach to address the issue of peaceful disruption and insecurity. Disruption of peace and insecurity in Nigeria emanate from individual, families, communities, tribes, religious groups giving birth to political crises, kidnapping, oil theft and several others.

In the presence of the above challenges, no meaningful development can take place. However, a country which is characterized by relative peace where individual groups or co-operate bodies and government at large can pursue their daily duties without fear, danger and disturbance is said to be secure and peaceful. Since security and peaceful living are rights of citizens, the fight to achieve this should be all encompassing. Unfortunately the government of the day is not proactive in fighting insecurity in the country. The implication is that people cannot go about their legitimate duties and on the long run, it will affect the economic, political and educational activities in the country. Ogwola and Odoba (2022) in their study of fulani herdsmen and farmers' conflict in Agatu, Benue State are of the opinion that the escalation of armed invasion in Agatu by Fulani Militia is a cause to worry about as it has posed grave implications for peace, good governance, economic and educational development. Government institutions such as libraries should be involved in this struggle in order for the country to attain relative peace.

Libraries are integral and key contributors to national development due to the position they occupy in the society. It is an important intellectual resource of the nation which helps to promote information dissemination, studies and research development. Njoku and Ken-Agbiriogu (2020), state that libraries provide the instructional materials to keep users to solve the problems of their information needs in cultural, political, educational, social and economic development. Libraries are information centers which concern with information gathering that borders on the issues of that environment and disseminates same to influence the thinking behaviour and attitude of the citizens of the environment.

Objectives of this Paper

The objectives of the study are:

i. To emphasize that libraries and librarians as custodians of information have role to play in promoting peace and national security in Nigeria.

ii. To stress the need for information provision as a crucial tool in promoting peace and security in the country.

iii. To charge librarians, information professionals that the fight for peace and national security should not be left alone in the hands of the military and other security agencies in the country.

iv To emphasize that the fight for insurgency should not only be left in the hands of security agency alone

Conceptual Discourse on Peace

Peace is a dynamic process in which justice, equity and respect for basic human rights are maximized. Onyemachi (2016) sees peace as not just freedom from war or violence, but calm atmosphere that emanates from argument or serious disagreements that should have resulted to violent activities. Peace is a condition where people living in a particular environment operate harmoniously within themselves and with their next door neighbours. Peace is a basic right and necessity which every citizen is expected to enjoy. In their submission, Oben, Ada and Abeng (2019) brought in some schools of thought about peace in the following order:

Firstly, the functionalist school of thought considers peace as a product of function of other social structures and institutions. In their thinking, peace has the function of social integration and order.

Secondly, socialist views peace as a condition in which there is no social conflict in which individual and groups are to meet their needs and expectations.

Thirdly, the philosopher sees peace as a natural and original God given state of human existence.

In any forms of argument, peace is a model of harmonious relationship based on cooperation and social integration among groups, devoid of crises which create enabling environment for every citizen to enjoy his or her fundamental human right. In a situation where there is no crises, war, violent and conflict within nation and between nation's sovereignty, such atmosphere should be considered as peace. By extension, peace is the total aggregate of calm in the absence of crises and the calmness that may result from settling crises.

An Overview of National Security in Nigeria

Security issues have been discussed in several fora within and outside the country with various solutions proffered by individuals or groups, but no lasting solutions have been identified. National security is the total aggregate of protection of human lives, communities, resources and the sovereignty of the state. It is, according to Omede (2012), a dynamic condition which involves the relative ability of the state to counter threats to its core values and interests. National security is gradually moving from a narrow focus on a defense against international threats and is now dwelling on domestic threats. Egah (2015), when discussing National security in Nigeria quotes McGrew (1998) and states that national security holds two important pillars which are:

i. The maintenance and protection of the social-economic order in the face of internal and external threat, and

ii. The promotion of international order which minimizes the threats to core values and interest as well as to the domestic order.

It implies that National Security has a core mandate of protecting the economic, political and social order of populace against the internal and external attack.

In Nigeria, the 1999 constitution as amended, chapter II section 14, sub-section 2(b) states that, "the security and the welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of the government". Federal Government of Nigeria is empowered by the constitution without discrimination to protect the lives of human beings and their resources from local and international attack. National Security borders on the preservation of human existence, the hard earned economic resources, social activities, political, government activities and the sovereign state in relation to international order.

Let us consider a highlight of major incidences of security disruptions from 2011-2025.. On the 26th of August 2011, United Nations building was bombed in Abuja. The Christmas day bomb blast at St. Theresa Catholic Church, Madalla Niger State was on the 25th of December, 2011.The Nigeria Army Divisional Headquarters in Kaduna was attacked on the 20th of January, 2012. In February, 2014, the Agip gas pipeline was blown off by Niger Delta militants in River state.. In February, 2016, armed Fulani herdsmen had a gruesome attack on Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State in which 700 people were chased away from six villages, over 200 persons were killed and houses were razed. There was another attack on the Uzo Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State on the 25th of April, 2016. Southern Kaduna in Kaduna State experienced the worst form of attack which was described as genocide in which 808 lives were lost, 53 injured, 1,422 houses, 16 churches, 19 shops and one primary school were burnt down as reported by Owan and Ebebe in (2019). In Jos, Plateau State, on the 24th and 25th of June, 2018 as reported by Idegu (2018), 86 persons were killed by gunmen, 8 persons were hospitalized and 50 houses were razed. The most recent breach of insecurity was the youth protest which started from the 1st – 10th of August, 2024 tagged, "#End Bad Governance" as a result of bad economy and hunger in the land. Economic activities were completed shut down for 10 days where federal and state high ways were blocked, government structures, business premises and individual houses were burnt down. These are few reported cases by the press. There were several security breaches that were not documented either by the print or electronic media.

Causes of Security Challenges in Nigeria

Insecurity is the state of not being protected from internal and external attack. There are several factors which are responsible for insecurity in the country. Some of them are considered below:

Ethno-multilingualism:

This is one of the dominant and pervasive problems when it comes to issues of security in Nigeria. The country is made up of heterogeneous cultures and different languages which the last is a potent vehicle of transmitting values, norms and beliefs from generation to generation. Because of this diversity in language and culture, cohesion is a very big problem. Ushie (2019) observes that, for national development to thrive there must be language acceptability and cohesion in running of the state affairs. Nigeria with over 450 languages, operating in the same context is seen as a plural society which Oluwabamide (2019) believes that plural societies are often characterized with high rate of conflicts.

Political Crises:

This may arise from god fathers in politics, election fraud, imposition of candidates and breach of zonal arrangement among others. Political god fathers are big time politicians such as state governors, senators and even the sitting and former presidents that influenced the elections of their preferred candidates. Once their political sons refuse to follow their instruction in sharing political appointments, sharing of money or other national services, it results into serious crises that involved both the led and the followers. Electoral fraud is characterized with ballot box snatching, rigging of election, vote buying and many others which are inimical to the smooth conduct of election. The outcome of political crises is the killing of people, burning of houses and destruction of hard earned economic resources which by implication causes insecurity in the country.

Unemployment:

Unemployment, either composite or structural has caused a lot of security challenges in the country. Composite unemployment has to do with graduate of various levels without gainful employment while structural unemployment results in talents not being used where they are available. The causes of youth restiveness are as a result of unemployment and idleness in the land. When youth take to streets to register their grievances as a result of unsatisfactory state of affairs, the effect is waste of lives and economic resources as it was experienced in the recent #End bad governance staged from the 1st - 10th August, 2024 in the country.

Marginalization

In Nigeria, some sections of the country feel that the national government marginalized them in sharing of national cake which borders on appointments into public offices, infrastructural development or citing of government projects. The argument is that federal character should be followed in the allocation of resources and appointments. The dissatisfaction that arises from non compliance by the government, results in the call for resource control. The people of the south-south zone complained that the oil which is the main stay of Nigerian economy is extracted from their region, yet they are being marginalized. Chukwuemeka (2011) opines that, dissatisfaction of the people of south-south, especially, the youths on the low level of attention given to the development of their region and the damages to their ecology of oil spillage are the major causes of insecurity.

Ethnic and Religious Conflict

Ethnic conflict may arise from differences between different tribes that shares common boarder or citing of development projects by government on a disputed land and named it after a particular community. In a related development, unequal socio-economy of different ethnic groups may lead to inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts. Religious crisis as a result of one's faith causes security threat in Nigeria. In Nigeria, the dominant religions are Christianity and Islam. Most of the crises in the Northern Nigeria are perpetrated by Christians and Muslims. Their

activities are characterized by the burning of churches, mosques, residential buildings, business premises and killing of people.

Boko Haram Islamic Sect

In 2011, Boko Haram sect initiated a campaign of suicide bombing, burning of houses, churches, educational institutions and kidnapping of school children, an act which took place in Nigeria, particularly North East for the first time. Their slogan is, western education is evil. Since then, the activities of Boko Haram have been going on unabated. This escalation of insurgency between 2012, 2013 and 2014 led to the declaration of states of emergency by the federal government on three Northern States of Bornu, Yobe and Adamawa Agada (2016). This is one of the security challenges that until now, no lasting solution have been identified by the federal government. The overall implication is the unprecedented security risk in the region and the entire nation, impediment to trades and investments which lead to economic lost. Peaceful co-existence, economic stability, sustainable livelihood and development have been affected.

In addition to those itemized above is the leadership deficit at all levels of governance in the country. Dambazau (2014) agrees that, there may be several factors which have contributed to Nigeria security challenges, but there is no doubt, that poor governance and lack of effective leadership at all levels of governance is central in attempting to explain the problem with Nigeria.

Sustainable Economic Development

Economic sustainability requires balancing environmental, societal and economical considerations in the pursuit of development and an improved quality of life. It is, according to Shaapera (2017), the intergenerational equity, just and peaceful societies, social tolerance, environmental preservation and restoration as well as poverty alleviation and economic natural resource conservation. Sustainable economic development is a total aggregate of all economic indices in relation to socio-political, cultural, technological process which focuses on improving the quality of lives of the entire population on the basis of active and meaningful participation in the economic environment.

For economy to be sustained, the economic activities of the country will have the capacity to raise the standard of living of its residents by providing individuals with basic livelihood requirements (food, shelter, clothes, education, health, good roads, adequate power supply, good and sufficient water supply, employment etc). Anyim (2021) is of the opinion that economic development is the process of judicious use and conservation of natural resources for overall improvement in the quality of life for present and future generations on a long term basis.

In order for Nigeria as a nation to develop economically, there must be an increase in productive activities in the industry, mining, agriculture, metallurgy sub-sector, human capital development etc, in order to promote exports. Anunobi (2013) opines that before the economy will be developed and sustained, challenges such as severe poverty, hunger, insecurity, disease control, climate change and ecosystem vulnerability are to be taken care.

The place of libraries in National Security Information Dissemination

Libraries are undoubtedly an information center saddled with the responsibilities of information generation, storage, repackage and dissemination. The primary focus of library is to ensure peaceful co-existence, fairness, justice, national unity and international co-operation. This implies that libraries play a crucial role on the issue of national security and integration. Libraries and librarians as information custodians and managers, decide what information materials people should read, see and hear. Information provision is a crucial factor in handling national security, so once the relevant information is not circulated at the right time to the right people it may eventually leads to breakdown of law and order. Abdulsalam J.A. et al, (2023) in his study, curbing insecurity in Nigeria: The role of libraries in North Central Nigeria shows that libraries,

through their core information management and dissemination can significantly contribute to reducing Nigeria's protracted insecurity. Ossai-Ugbah (2013), confirms this, when the author opines that, information is crucial to national security and the line between security and insecurity lies in the information given and information withheld. It is therefore becomes imperative that libraries disseminate relevant information at the right time in order to curb the activities of insecurity for peace to thrive.

Community Engagement

Libraries and Librarians adopt sensitization campaign and mobilization by bringing the activities of libraries to the doorsteps of the citizens and educate them on the ills of insecurity. Under this propaganda mechanism, a library week will be created with various outreach programmes. The Outline programmes may include but not limited to mounting of bill boards, a walk through the streets and market places with handbills, placards advocating for peace using mega phones to sensitize the public about government programmes and discouraging the populace not to be induced into joining activities that will brew insecurity. Librarians should go outside the wall of libraries to organize seminars and symposia where experts will be drawn from different sectors to deliberate on the issue of insecurity and proffer solutions which will bring relative peace and create enabling environment for economic activities to grow.

Media Propaganda

In this digital era, electronic media is one of the most effective means of mass mobilization. Libraries and Librarians through radio, television and on-line (social-media) programmes can create awareness and educate people on the negative aspect of terrorism and insurgents. Once these programmes are design where relevant and timely information is circulated to the right people through sensitization, the populace will be informed and be liberated from misconception, lies which leads to social unrest and economic stagnation. Librarians can leverage on the use of social-media and create library websites, use of face book and other on-line platforms and freely disseminate right information in order to nip the circulation of wrong information in favour of insecurity.

Peace Education

Libraries can promote peace and reconciliation through the knowledge, ideas, principles and processes which are inherent in it. Library through peace education can teach the public about the causes and effects of extremism and war. Libraries as instrument for conflict resolution, through peace education, help in promoting peaceful co-existence, unity, oneness, harmonious relationship among all the citizens. Abdulasalam, J.A et al (2022), in their study of curbing insecurity in Nigeria; The role of libraries in North Central Nigeria agree that, libraries in collaboration with stakeholders can promote moral education, and providing information resources which can foster peace and conflict resolution. The concept of peace education is a deliberate attempt to teach children, youth and adult the dynamics of conflict and the promotion of peace making skills at homes, schools and communities, using all the instruments of socialization (Acita and Idris, 2016).

Provision of Materials

Finally, libraries of all kinds are in position to provide needed learning materials which support specific sector of economy. Take for instance, libraries which are established in Universities of Agriculture, Colleges of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Institutes provide learning materials, information service delivery in support of farmers, agriculture extension workers, livestock producers, research worker to meet their needs. The aim is to ensure food security and sustainability for overall economic growth. This is the approach by which libraries intervene in other sectors of the economy by providing reading materials that meet their sectorial information needs.

Conclusion

Insecurity, if it is not handled on time and handles very effectively, the economic lost, social unrest, political crises and other peaceful disruptions will be the order of the day in country. The fight for peace should not be left only in the hands of military and other security agencies in the country. Libraries and librarians as information custodians and managers can stir up the tide and be fully involved in the fight against insecurity. Effective provision of information to curb insecurity for peace to exist will create enabling environment for sustainable economic development in Nigeria.

Suggestions

a. The national government of Nigeria should as a matter of urgency involve libraries and librarians in the war against insurgency through policy formulation

b. Libraries and librarians should make a useful noise and market themselves and their products in order for them to be seen, known and used.

c. Libraries as reservoir of knowledge and community bridge builders should stand up to its responsibilities of preaching peace education through propaganda programmes.

d. Adequate fund should be given to libraries and librarians by the parents organization and/or proprietors of schools in terms of academic libraries and the State and Federal Government in terms of public libraries in order to acquire needed resources which will aid them in information dissemination.

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