Community Leaders as a Community Relations Strategy for the Fight against Insurgency in the North East of Nigeria: The Boko Haram Experience

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Abstract

This study aimed at examining the influence of community leaders as a community relations strategy in fighting against Boko Haram insurgents in the North East, Nigeria. Specifically, the study strives to; ascertain the effect of community leaders' collaboration with the Nigerian Army in building community trust, community participation, and knowledge sharing. The study adopted a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative survey research design. Face to face interview was conducted with the community leaders as part the qualitative study, while a structured questionnaire was administered to the local residents as part of the quantitative study. A total of 344 questionnaires were found to be correctly filled and suitable for this study. The stated Null hypotheses were analysed using Pearson product moment correlations. The results revealed that: community leaders' collaboration with the Nigerian Army will have a significant effect on community trust, community participation, and knowledge sharing. This study concluded that Community relations strategies such as community leaders must be embraced to end the insurgency troubling the North East of Nigeria, as it helps in building community trust, community participation and knowledge sharing.

Keywords: Public Relations, Community Relations, Community Leaders, Insurgency, Boko Haram.

1. Introduction

Community relations is one of the strategies of public relations that involves problem solving processes. It provides solutions to various problems facing organisations creates and maintains mutual understanding with the communities. A well planned community relations programme brings about attitudinal change, reinforces beliefs and changes public opinion towards an organisation or a group of people acting within a community. It is a communication effort that enables the publics to understand the environmental and societal issues affecting them and also encourage the stakeholders to contribute towards solving the

problems (Forrest & Mays, 1997, in cited in Ogbonna, 2021). As a responsibility of every business-minded organisation, community relations builds organisation-community relationship through communication with, and participation of community leaders and organisations as well as transparent disclosure of information to a larger community and strengthening community development (Onabanjo, 2005).

Community relations is seen "as an institution's planned active and continuing participation with and within a community to maintain and enhance its environment to the benefit of both the institution and the community" (Littimore, 2004 as cited in Wilson & Jubrin, 2014). It is one of the problem-solving processes of public relations. It provides remedies to various organisational problems, and creates and maintains relationships with the communities (Yakubu, 2020). Community relations as a responsibility of every serious organisation, builds organisation-community relationship through communication with, and participation of community leaders and organisation as well as transparent disclosure of information to larger community and strengthening community development. It underscores the organisational need for community support, understanding, trust and acceptance. It grants social license which is a set of meaningful relationship between an organisation and affected stakeholders based on mutual trust and understanding (Warhurst, 2001 in Moffat & Zhang, 2013).

Community relations strategies, such as use of community leaders and opinion leaders provide systematic structure for dialoguing and mediating between the local residents in the communities and the organisation in order to achieve mutual objectives such community developmental projects or programmes such as the fight against Boko Haram insurgents in Nigeria. Community leaders are the major opinion leaders in rural communities. They are those limited few in the community that are educated or not illiterates to an extent, with exposure to idea and are sources of advice and knowledge that are elected or selected to lead them. Some are Traditional Rulers, Chiefs, President Generals, Village Heads, etc. They influence people within their social networks and communities. Influence of these groups on the society have been studied over time and found to significantly influence positive social and behavioural changes in the society (Theall, Fleckman& Jacobs, 2015). The involvement of community leaders as a tool of community relations have influenced active participation of individuals within a community to tackle challenges facing the community such as health issues (Sacks et al., 2017); dissemination of information within the community (Garney et al., 2015); community participation in communicable disease control and elimination (Atkinson et al., 2011); community leaders and trust building in polio immunization and control in the Northern part of Nigeria (Yakubu, 2020); and community leaders involvement in the information management on tuberculosis control and eradication in rural communities of Enugu State, Nigeria (Ogbonna, 2021). These studies and others have shown the effectiveness of community relations programmes in building trust, community participation, and knowledge sharing on various issues and challenges facing the communities.

Since the year 2011, the Boko Haram sects have been carrying out invasions and attacks on political and religious groups especially Christians, government and private

installations, businesses, security agencies and civilians in many rural communities (Centre for Preventive Action, 2022). The invasion of the sects involves use of mostly female suicide bombers and arm assaults on helpless citizens especially in their farms and rural markets. The female suicide bombers are mostly young girls kidnapped from their schools, farms, and villages. Meanwhile, The linkage and collaboration of the sect and other Islamist terrorist groups has further escalated insecurities in most Northern part of the country, and sometimes, they launch their attacks from the neighbouring countries such as Niger and Cameroun.

Since community relations is an effort to establish trust which guarantees cordial relationships with various key publics and helps in securing understanding and sensitivity to community concerns, issues, and problems (Parani, 2016), it is imperative to apply community relations strategies such as use of community leaders in the fight against insurgencies in Northeast and this would lead to restoring trust between the army and the community members, increase the participation of the local residents in the fight and encourages residents to share knowledge regarding the operation of the sects.

2. Statement of the Problem

According to Statista (2021), the terrorism index (0-10) for Nigeria from 2011 to 2019 increased from 6.95 in 2011 to 8.31 in 2019. Meanwhile, it recorded between 9.01-9.31 from 2014 to 2016. Nigeria also ranks second after Afghanistan in the number of deaths in the countries most impacted by terrorism in 2019 with 1,245 deaths. In the most active perpetrators groups worldwide in 2019, based on number of attacks, Boko Haram and Fulani extremists made it to top 10 in 2017-2019. The Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria is based on radical Islamic ideology with the use of bullet method, kidnapping, beheading of victims, and engaging in suicide missions in various instances (Yusufu, 2019). Meanwhile, fighting wars with such indicators such wars requires a comprehensive and holistic approach to involve not just the use of firearms, but with such tools or strategy to curb the spread of the radical Islamic ideology through public and community relations strategies. The government method to conflict has been fundamentally reactive and has failed to settle identified problems with local leaders being held responsible for supporting their communities during conflicts (Peace bulletin, 2003). Efforts by security forces to execute the law only escalate the situation as a result of allegations of biasness, resulting to vicious of gun bullets, and with the insecure borders (Kaino, 2017). Local cultural solutions have not stopped the fight against insurgency attacks. Community relations has a very difficult but crucial role to play in the fight against insurgencies but unfortunately, is often taken for granted by stakeholders, political decision- makers and the armed forces during such times.

Community relations strategies such as community leaders have a very difficult but important role to play in the fight against insurgency but unfortunately, they are sometimes not taken serious by stakeholders, political decision- makers and the armed forces during insurgencies. In Nigeria, it appears that communities are not involved as partners for tackling these insurgent attacks in terms of participation and knowledge sharing. This could be as a

result of lack of trust, as the case with the management of conflicts in the Niger Delta (Okoh, 2005).

The activities of the dreaded sect in Northeastern Nigeria over the years has been a torn in the flesh of the government and local communities in the region. These activities has claimed my lives of the local residents, soldiers and even the aid workers in the region. It has also destroyed properties, goods and farmlands worth billions of naira. The efforts of the government in tackling the menace of the sect so far failed to eliminate the problem as the threat of insurgency still remain unabated in several parts of Northeastern Nigeria and spreading down to the Southern part of the country. Nevertheless, in light of the stalemate between the Nigerian government and Boko Haram, community relations strategies such as community leaders can certainly provide a potentially relevant opportunity in areas where the unidirectional method of military force has fallen short. There are cases where the army invade communities and attack the wrong targets due to the fact that there was no knowledge sharing and community participation. While community leaders has been seen as a veritable tool in the fight against insurgency attacks, the extent to which this is the case in the Northeastern Nigeria is widely unknown. This research seeks to fill this gap by finding out if it is true that community relations strategies such as community leaders are veritable tool in the fight against insurgency attacks in Northeastern Nigeria.

However, there is no known study that has examined the effect of community leaders on the fight against insurgency attacks in Northeastern Nigeria. Most of the available studies are on community relations and polio eradication in Northern Nigeria (Yakubu, 2020), community relations in Tuberculosis campaign in Enugu, Nigeria (Ogbonna, 2021). As a result, the major aim of this present study is to examine the effect of community leaders on the fight against insurgency in North East, Nigeria. The significance of this study is that it would present a guide to the Nigerian army, community leaders and local residents on strategies for tackling insurgency and other community crisis. It would also contribute to the enrichment of the body of knowledge in community relations.

3. Review of Related Literature

3.1 Theoretical Underpinnings

Theory of Persuasion and Social Influence

This theory emphasizes the importance of communication in persuading, shaping, changing, and reinforcing perception, feeling, thinking, and human behaviour. An effective persuasive message or communication helps in positively modifying the thinking, perception, and behaviours of the targets. According to the theory, the persuasive nature of the message is dependent on where the message is coming from, the nature of the message and who is receiving the message. It is believed that credibility of the source of the message plays a greater role in the believability of the message. Therefore, the more credible the source of the message is, the better the acceptability by the publics.

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Community relations strategies are used to convince the community members to change their perception and attitudes, acquire new skills, and behave in certain ways different from their normal ways. In terms of fighting insurgency such as Boko Haram, factors such as the source of message, the message itself and the receiver must be put into considerations. Dealing with the local residents where the activities of the sect is rampant, the source of the message (Community leaders) in the volatile areas should must be considered. The nature of the message (Army's collaboration with the community leaders with the use of local contents) to persuade the community members towards an issue such as insurgency affecting the communities and how to build trust, increase community participation and knowledge sharing for effective and efficient fight against insurgency.

3.2 Community Relations, Community Trust, Participation and Knowledge Sharing

Mutual relationship is the focal point of any community relations programme. As a tool of public relations, it is generally recognized as a vital tool or strategy for building and sustaining a mutually beneficial relationship. For trust based relationship, community relations encourages working with community members to identify their needs and problems. The organisations thereafter, design strategic programmes and ensure active participation of community members in the design and execution of these programmes that may result in mutual relationship and trust. This shows that organisations with effective and efficient community relations are likely to be trusted by the publics (Yakubu, 2020). Many authors and researchers have explained community relations in various manners. Public relations practitioners Doorley and Garcia (2011) see community relations "as the strategic development of mutually beneficial relationships with targeted communities towards the long-term goal of establishing image and trust". Nweke (2001), describe community relations as the deliberate effort and planned programme embarked upon by an organization to promote a smooth relationship with the host community. It is also an effective way for an organisation to be known, spread goodwill, build trust and develop relationships (Center, et al., 2011). Meanwhile, it has been emphasized that the essence of community relations programmes or engagement is not just for a better image, but to develop trust-based relationship. Trust is a quality or virtue. In any trusted relationship, there is confidence, certainty and reliance. Trust in a relationship brings positive energy or effects, stronger cohesion and lower conflicts (Ferdowsian, 2016). Besides, continuous engagement with community leaders helps organisations to achieve further understanding of the community where they operate which lessens crisis and increase harmony and trust (Yakubu, 2020).

Community participation deals with active involvement of the individuals in community focusing on a particular project or programmes in order to solve problems facing the community, influence policies of the government for the overall improvement of the wellbeing of the community members (Ertsen et al., 2007). When an organisation operating in a community or government agencies formulating and executing policies for the betterment of the community members, it is important to involve the community members through the leaders. Involving the community members, through engagement is more likely to develop the sense of commitment towards the particular project (Sanoff, 2006).

Knowledge sharing is an act of transferring clearly stated information from an individual, group, or organisation to another. It is one of the most vital factors that helps an organisation to achieve its objectives (Demirel&Seckin, 2011). It is involves helping individuals or group on better ways to collaborate in order to solve problems facing them. A deliberate sharing of knowledge regarding a particular issue in any system is as a result of established trust among the members of the organisation or between the individuals sharing knowledge. When trust is established, community members develop the commitment to participate in a particular programme or project, and have confidence to share knowledge.

4. Objectives of the Study

- To examine the influence of Collaboration between the Nigerian Army and Community leaders on building community trust in the fight against insurgency.
- To examine the influence of Collaboration between the Nigerian Army and Community leaders on building community participation in the fight against insurgency.
- To examine the influence of Collaboration between the Nigerian Army and Community leaders on knowledge sharing in the fight against insurgency.

5.Hypotheses Development

Community leaders are those limited few in the community elected or selected with an authority and a higher level of education, exposure to ideas. These individuals are sources of knowledge to the community members. Their level of exposure made it possible for them to exert high influence on the local residents within their communities. They perform a lot of functions which include providing access to information, provide feedback to their community, act as role models and influence others through increased awareness and persuasion. Insurgency has been described by many researchers and organisations. The focus of insurgents is to aggressively challenge a constituted authority and take control of power and territory. It is seen as a coordinated movement with the sole objective of challenging a State through the use of force and arm conflict (Haviland, 2012). Many researches have been conducted to examine the effects of public relations strategies in the fight against insurgencies. The work of Mohammed, Saadu and Faruq (2017) on the influence of traditional institutions in Farmer-Herder conflicts management in three chosen Local Government Areas (Damboa, Jere and Magumeri LGAs) of Borno State, Nigeria shows that having a routine meeting by the traditional rulers and other stakeholders at the village level would avert conflict between the farmers and herders in the area. In the same vein, Oyedokun and Lawal (2017), conducted a research and investigated the participation of community leaders in conflict settlement and management among farmers and herdsmen in Oyo state, Nigeria. Findings show that the use of community leaders in settling disputes was effective. Resolution measures mainly utilized by the community leaders include dialogue with parties involved, use of village committees, negotiating settlement, entering into an agreement and ensuring that such agreement is implemented and use of law enforcement agencies.

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Meanwhile, the study of Temitayo (2017) investigated the continual growth and development of the terrible and greatly feared sect called Boko Haram, its activities, and the strategies used by the Nigerian government to entirely destroy this problem and findings show that the techniques used by Government to solve this problem have brought little or no success because critical elements such as the use of community leaders and other conflict settlement tools have not been given the required attention. The study suggested that the government of Nigeria should, in the drive to reduce and ultimately settle this Boko Haram insurgency, initiate a conflict settlement apparatus rather than the use of the military which represents the use of force against the sect. Therefore, there is a need to evaluate community relations strategy for effective and efficient fight against insurgency. From the foregoing, we hypothesize thus:

H_1: Collaboration of the Nigerian Army and Community leaders has no significant effect on building community trust in the fight against insurgency.

H_2: Collaboration of the Nigerian Army and Community leaders has no significant effect on community participation in the fight against insurgency.

H_3: Collaboration of the Nigerian Army and Community leaders has no significant influence on boosting knowledge sharing in the fight against insurgency.

6.Methodology

This study adopted the mixed methods design. The mixed method research design involves the use of exploratory, qualitative and quantitative designs as the study sought to understand the context of community leaders and their place in the fight against insurgency and community development. The exploratory, qualitative and quantitative techniques have their advantages and the motive for adopting them is to draw from their strengths, and enjoy the complementary advantage, expand a set of results, and discover something that could be missed if only a qualitative or a quantitative approach was used. The quantitative data were collected with a structured questionnaire administered to the local residents in the communities while the qualitative data were collected through an in-depth interview over a period of four months (February – May, 2022) with the selected community leaders. The study was carried out in the following States: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe. The choice of North East Nigeria was based on the fact that insurgency attacks of Boko Haram are most noticeable there.

6.1.Data Presentation and Analysis

Out of the 384 questionnaires distributed to the local residents, only 344 were properly filled, returned and found worthy for the study. The data collected for the study were analyzed, and findings interpreted in line with the objectives of the study.

Table.1 Descriptive State of Respondents.

S/N	Characteristics	Respondents Category	Frequency	Percent
1	Gender	Males	215	62.

		Females	129	129.
		Total	344	100.0
2	Age	18-25	79	22.97
		26-33	117	34.01
		34-41	97	28.20
		42-49	33	9.59
		50-above	18	5.23
		Total	344	100.0
3	Marital status	Single	110	31.98
		Married	221	60.4
		Other categories	26	7.56
		Total	344	100.0
4	Educational Qualification	No former education	95	27.62
		Primary education	13	3.78
		Secondary education	114	33.14
		Tertiary education	122	35.4
		Total	344	100.0
5.	Occupation	Civil servants	135	39.2
		Students	75	21.8.
		Traders/Business	50	14.5.
		Farmers	80	23.3
		Total	344	100.0
6.	Income Level	High	54	15.7
		Moderate	90	26.2
		Low	200	58.1
		Total	344	100.0

Interpretation of table-1.

The respondents gender as displayed in table 1 indicates that the males 215(62%) were more than the females 129(38.%) which shows that males were more involved in the study than the females. On the same table 1, the marital status of the respondents indicates that those who are married constitute the highest percentage of respondents 221 (60.47%). This shows that married respondents are more involved in the study than the single and other categories who constitute 110 (31.98) and 26 (7.56%) respectively.

From the table, virtually not all the respondents were educated, 95 (27. 62%) had no formal education, 13(3.78%) had their primary education. Secondary education holders were about 114(33.14%) while others with tertiary education were about 122(35.47%). These statisticsfurther indicate that most of the respondents had higher education while a relatively small number had at least high school education necessary for the respondents to have an informed knowledge on the subject of the study. On the occupation of respondents the table shows that out of the 344 total respondents, 135(39.2%) were civil servants, 75(21.8 %) were students, 50(14.5%) were traders, while.80 (23.3%) were farmers. On the same table 4.2,

respondents with high income level represents 54 (15.7%). 90 (26.2%) and 200 (58.1%) represents moderate and low income earners.

6.2.Testing of Hypotheses

The hypotheses stated earlier in the study were tested statistically in this section using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The result of the statistical testing was used to either accept or not to accept the Null hypotheses formulated at 0.01 level of significance.

Hypothesis one

Ho: Collaboration of the Nigerian Army and Community leaders has no significant effect on building community trust in the fight against insurgency.

H_1: Collaboration of the Nigerian Army and Community leaders has a significant effect on building community trust in the fight against insurgency.**.**

Table.2. Correlations results between Collaboration of Nigerian Army and Community Leaders to build community trust in the fight against insurgency.

		Community Leadersand Army	Community Trust
Community Leaders and Army	Pearson Correlation	1	.660[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	344	344
Community Trust	Pearson Correlation	.660[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	344	344
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Interpretation of table-2.

From table 2 above, the correlation coefficient (r = 0.660) between collaboration of community leaders with the security agency and community trust in the fight against insurgency is strong and positive. The significant value of 0.000 (p< 0.01) reveals a significant relationship between collaboration of community leaders with the security agency and community trust in the fight against insurgency. Based on this, the null hypothesis that collaboration of the Nigerian Army and Community leaders has no significant effect on building community trust in the fight against insurgency was not accepted. Therefore, collaboration of community leaders and the Nigerian Army significantly contribute to community trust in the fight against insurgency in the North East, Nigeria.

Hypothesis two
Ho: Collaboration of the Nigerian Army and Community leaders has no significant effect on community participation in the fight against insurgency.

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H₁: Collaboration of the Nigerian Army and Community leaders has no significant effect on community participation in the fight against insurgency.

Table.3. Correlations results between Collaboration of Nigerian Army and Community Leaders to boost community participation in the fight against insurgency.

		Community Leaders and Army	Community Participation
Community Leaders and Army	Pearson Correlation	1	.643**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	344	344
Community Participation	Pearson Correlation	.643**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	344	344
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Interpretation of table-3.

From table 3 above, the correlation coefficient (r = 0.643) between collaboration of the community leaders with the Nigerian Army and community participation in the fight against insurgency is strong and positive. The significant value of 0.000 (p< 0.01) reveals a significant relationship between collaboration of the community leaders with the Nigerian Army and community participation. Based on that, the null hypothesis that collaboration of the Nigerian Army and Community leaders has no significant effect on community participation in the fight against insurgency was not accepted. Therefore, collaboration of the community leaders with the Nigerian Army significantly contribute to community participation in the fight against insurgency in the North East of Nigeria.

Hypothesis three
Ho: Collaboration of the Nigerian Army and Community leaders has no significant influence on boosting knowledge sharing in the fight against insurgency.

H₁: Collaboration of the Nigerian Army and Community leaders has a significant influence on boosting knowledge sharing in the fight against insurgency.

Table.4. Correlations results between Collaboration of Nigerian Army and Community Leaders to boost knowledge sharing in the fight against insurgency.

		Community Leaders and Army	Knowledge Sharing
Community Leaders and	Pearson Correlation	1	.637**

Army	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	344	344
Knowledge Sharing	Pearson Correlation	$.637^{**}$	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	344	344
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Interpretation of table-4.

From table 4 above, the correlation coefficient (r = 0.637) between collaboration of the community leaders with the Nigerian Army and knowledge sharing in the fight against insurgency is strong and positive. The significant value of 0.000 (p< 0.01) reveals a significant relationship between collaboration of the community leaders with the Nigerian Army and knowledge sharing. Based on that, the null hypothesis that collaboration of the Nigerian Army and Community leaders has no significant influence on boosting knowledge sharing in the fight against insurgency was not accepted. Therefore, collaboration of the community leaders with the Nigerian Army significantly contribute to knowledge sharing in the fight against insurgency in the North East, Nigeria.

6.3. Results of the Interview and Discussion with the Community Leaders

From the interview of the community leaders, the analysis was based on the following themes: Boko Haram attacks and causes; effects of the attacks, Community leaders' involvement in the decision making process in order to build trust, encourage members to participate and share information on the activities of the sects.

On attacks by the Boko Haram insurgents in the communities, the participants were asked narrated the existence of the sects in their communities and its effects on the economic activities.

"Yes, the insurgency attacks have been carried out in our communities, particularly to halt economic activities, kill some people, abduct some, and destroy properties and among others. The type of insurgency attacks by Boko Haram's sects are attacks on schools, students, churches, mosques, cow rustling, markets , teachers and among others. It charts the different kinds of assaults waged by the group including targeted killings, suicide attacks, widespread abduction, burning and looting and burning down classrooms" (P2).

The community leaders reported that those mostly affected by the insurgency are the farmers, students, teachers, herders and security agencies stationed in the communities.

"Everybody was affected including students, teachers, workers, farmers, villagers, business people, churches and government agencies especially security forces. Students are being adopted, sold into slavery or released upon ransom payment by the government. Security

forces, farmers, and herders are killed and food items of the villagers taken by the insurgents" (P5).

On the causes of the insurgency and the severity of the attacks on the various communities, the participants believe that religious extremism is the main cause of the attacks. Others include government failure on social welfare, poverty, lack of education, morals and lack of community engagement by the government agencies.

"The major causes of insurgency attacks include extreme Islamic ideologies, economic marginalization, and failures of the successive government in addressing social issues, security failures and among others". (P7).

The community leaders believe that despite the government efforts in tackling insurgency through direct confrontation, use of media relations, local radio, it has not resulted in the defeat of the sects. The ideology-based wars are not defeated easily and proper engagement with the community leaders is needed. Community leaders' involvement in the process of tackling the menace is necessary in order to build trust, make community members to participate and share knowledge regarding the insurgents.

"Government is doing everything possible to tackle the insurgents but that attacks keep increasing on a daily basis, making residents to live in fear. Many community members are recruited voluntarily and forcefully due to the ideological nature of the war. If government show genuine commitment by involving the community leaders, who understand the people, terrain and reason for the insurgency, I believe it will help in building trust between the Nigerian army and community members, encourage the members to participate in the Civilian Joint Task Force, and share information on the activities of the sects" (P4).

7.Discussion of Findings and Implications.

Community leaders are known to be effective in rural community development over the years. They are part of the opinion leaders and highly influential in their communities. Rural residents see the community leaders as knowledgeable and able to take better decisions that will bring positive change in the community. The findings of the study revealed that community leaders' collaboration with the Nigerian Army will significantly influence community trust in the fight against insurgency in the North East of the country. Though, community leaders are not heavily engaged in the fight against Boko Haram insurgents as seen from the interview, but the local community members believe that they are willing to trust the community leaders, and follow their instructions on the fight against Boko Haram insurgents. The finding is compatible with previous studies by Mohammed, Saadu and Faruq (2017) on building trust, communication and leadership. The study established that community leaders in a bid to resolve conflicts between farmers and herders engage in routine meetings with stakeholders and this step has significantly influenced trust among followers. In a similar study, Oyedokun and Lawal (2017) on the influence of community leaders on settling disputes between farmers and herders in Oyo State shows that community

leaders was effective in dialogue, negotiating settlements, entering into agreements, ensuring that the agreements are implemented and enforced. This implies that the engagement of community leaders in the fight against Boko Haram insurgents is vital in building community trust. Recent happenings show that most communities in the mostly affected areas do not trust the military strategies and also military not trusting on the local residents in the fight against the insurgents. This has led to series of accusations from both sides and it is not helping the fight against insurgency in the area.

Meanwhile, the findings revealed that community leaders' collaboration with the Nigerian Army will have a significant relationship with community participation in the fight against insurgency in the North East. This has led to the formation of the Civilian Joint Task Force in various communities facing attacks. Though, the attack did not stop with the formation of the JTF as there are reports of infiltration by the sects and spies within the community and the army. The finding is in line with previous studies by Temitayo (2017) which revealed that inadequate use of community leaders and other conflict resolution mechanisms have led to continuous attacks by the insurgents. This implies that the collaboration of the community leaders with the Army in the fight against insurgents is vital in community participation. This implies that the level of participation by community leaders is very vital in the fight against insurgency attacks within the community levels. When a good relationship is established between community heads and the affected parties, fighting insurgency attacks becomes easy,

Furthermore, community leaders are seen as the representatives of the people in rural communities. Vital information from the government and other external bodies are communicated through the community leaders. The community leaders, through various means communicate to the local residents and share knowledge received from the government and external bodies. The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between community leaders' collaboration with the army and knowledge sharing in the affected areas. This was validated by the fact that community leaders negotiate or mediate in the crisis, they ensure regular meetings with the parties and community interactions to clarify issues. The result of the present study is in accordance with previous studies by Mohammed et al. (2017) and Oyedokun and Lawal (2017) on the role of the leaders in awareness creation and knowledge sharing. These studies revealed that involvement of the community leaders helps in knowledge sharing because when the community residents have the trust, participate in the fight against insurgency, it would be easy for them to share information regarding the activities of the sects in the region to the community leaders and the army.

8.Conclusion.

The aim of conducting this study was to examine the influence of community leaders as a community relations tool in the fight against insurgency in the North East, Nigeria. It was observed that use of community leaders as a community relations strategy is gradually adopted in the fight against insurgency in the North East, Nigeria. Based on the findings, it is concluded that community relations is an effective community relations strategy that can be used to address many issues and challenges impeding on development in Nigeria. Community relations strategies such as the use of community leaders, is an effective tool to be used in attitudinal change, changing from negative to positive attitude towards an

organization, programmes, and policies. It is a both proactive and reactive behaviour change machinery that promotes people's trust, understanding, participation and knowledge sharing. Involving community leaders in policies and programmes is a cost effective way to gaining community trust, persuade residents in the community to engage and participate in a cause, and also share vital information regarding the cause or programme such as the fight against insurgency in Nigeria.

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