



Evaluating the Effectiveness of Operation Safe Corridor: Deradicalisation and Reintegration in Nigeria, 2015 – 2023

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What God cannot do does not exist. Elroi!

Abstract

This study evaluated the effectiveness of Nigeria's deradicalisation programme, Operation Safe Corridor, in achieving its goals of deradicalising, rehabilitating, and integrating ex-insurgent members. The study employed qualitative research method using case study and process tracing to generate and evaluate primary and secondary data, as well as test the study's hypothesis.

The study finds that Boko Haram insurgent activities persisted in Nigeria because OPSC focused on addressing micro-level root causes of violent extremism while neglecting meso- and macro-level causes, leading to a vicious cycle deradicalisation situation which in turn results in reintegration challenge.

This study developed and applied deradicalisation vicious and virtuous cycle to explain the challenges and recommendations for Nigeria's context and also proposed a two-way approach to deradicalisation and reintegration for ex-insurgents and victims to bridge the reintegration gap.

Key words: Operation Safe Corridor, Deradicalisation, Rehabilitation, Reintegration, Ex-insurgent, extremism, insurgency, recidivism

Abbreviations

OPSC – Operation Safe Corridor

DRR – Deradicalisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration

CREST- Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats

UNOCT – United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism

IPI – International Peace Institute

CDD – Centre for Democracy and Development

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

CEIP – Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

ICG – International Crisis Group

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Chapter One – Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Since 2009, north-eastern Nigeria has faced a growing insurgency led by Boko Haram, a violent extremist group responsible for widespread attacks, kidnappings, and bombings. The United States recognised Boko Haram as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation in 2013 while in 2014, the United Nations Security Council added Boko Haram to its list of terrorist organisations under its al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee because of the group's affiliation with al-Qaeda and later the Islamic State (ISWIL) (Walker, 2012; U.S Department of State, n.d; United Nations Security Council, 2014).

Violent insurgent activities in northeastern Nigeria present considerable humanitarian challenges for the communities in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe. These areas have experienced loss of life, livelihoods, properties, and infrastructures. As of 2023, over 35,000 civilian deaths were reported due to Boko Haram attacks since the conflict intensified in 2010 and more than 3.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Additionally, between 2009 and 2016, there were 1,044 incidents of terrorist attacks recorded in the region (Ogunnubi et al., 2022; Ugwueze et al., 2022).

To combat the over a decade-long insurgency, Nigerian government has used both kinetic and non-kinetic tactics. There have been different military deployments using the kinetic approach of suppressive force, which Walker (2012) deemed brutal and counterproductive, have been unable to end the insurgency in Northeastern Nigeria. This prompted the Nigerian government to introduce a non-kinetic strategy – Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC), aimed at countering radicalisation and encouraging members of Boko Haram to voluntarily disengage. The programme, led by the Nigerian Defence Headquarters, employs a non-kinetic approach, offering a pathway for repentant insurgents to surrender and reintegrate into society (Defence Headquarters, 2019; Hassan, 2022; Ugwueze et al., 2022).

Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) is a feature of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration. It was announced in 2015 and began operations in 2016. OPSC represents the Nigerian government's recognition that the war against insurgency cannot be won solely through a militarised approach, while OPSC can be said to be a “corridor of passage”, a window to encourage

voluntary defection, the lay-down of arms, and surrender by Boko Haram insurgents (fighters). Soft handling is also a feature when insurgents in a given country are its citizens. In addition to deradicalising remorseful extremists, OPSC aims to reintegrate ex-insurgents into their communities as law-abiding, productive members of society. During OPSC, repentant members would have access to civic programmes, de-radicalisation exercises, and vocational training to help them become valuable members of their communities. (Routley & Hassan, 2022; Salihu, 2021; Ugwueze et al., 2022). OPSC aims to completely deradicalise ex-insurgent members from the radical extremist ideology, rehabilitate them and reintegrate them back into the community.

This study seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of OPSC in achieving its stated objectives of deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration from its operation in 2016 to the end of the Buhari administration in 2023 and also identify conditions under which the programme is effective or not. It examines OPSC's objectives, its operation, and the implementation process to determine the success of deradicalisation and reintegration measures. It further assesses why the Nigerian government declares the programme a success despite continuous insurgent attacks and the ongoing deradicalisation programme.

1.2 Statement of Problem and Research Objectives

The long-term security challenge in Northern Nigeria remains significant even after the commencement of OPSC in 2016. The ongoing rise in the number of people in Internally Displaced Persons Camps due to insurgent activities raises questions about the effectiveness of the non-kinetic approach to insurgency in the affected area. OPSC aims to deradicalise, rehabilitate, and reintegrate former insurgents. Since the insurgency is still ongoing, it calls for an investigation into the effectiveness of the non-kinetic approach to determine whether it could be successful in fulfilling its aims or to identify which parts of the aim have been challenging to achieve. While existing studies have examined various aspects of OPSC, a gap remains in understanding the specific conditions under which deradicalisation programmes such as OPSC are effective. This study addresses that gap by analysing not only the extent to which OPSC has fulfilled its stated goals, but also by examining which conditions for success were present or absent in its

implementation. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of how and when non-kinetic approaches to deradicalisation, rehabilitation and reintegration can be effective in conflict and post-conflict environments.

The research thus aims

1. To examine the contents of the OPSC as a DRR (deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration) programme and how it was implemented in the Nigerian context.
2. To assess how different stakeholders have evaluated the effectiveness of the OPSC and,
3. To identify conditions that have enabled or constrained the effectiveness of OPSC, with a particular focus on the design of the programme, and the community acceptance of the programme, as a sustainable counter-insurgency programme for Nigeria's security challenges.

1.3 Research Questions

The primary research question guiding this study is:

“Under what conditions can deradicalisation programmes such as Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) be considered effective in achieving their goals of deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration?”

To answer this primary question, the dissertation addresses the following sub-questions, which cover the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical dimensions of the research and are aligned with chapter structure of this thesis:

1. What is the conceptual basis of deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration programmes?
2. What conditions for successful DRR programmes are identified in existing practitioner approaches and theoretical frameworks?
3. What are the main features of OPSC as a DRR programme in Nigeria?
4. How has OPSC been evaluated by government and non-governmental stakeholders in Nigeria and internationally?
5. What empirical conditions characterised the implementation of OPSC in Nigeria, particularly with respect to programme design, incentives for former combatants, and community acceptance?

1.4 Research Design and Methodology

This dissertation employs a qualitative case study design. It focuses on Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) as a deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration programme (DRR) within the context of Nigeria. The case is analysed as a single-case study (Gerring, 2004), with OPSC considered as a programme that is embedded in Nigeria's counter-insurgency efforts during the Buhari administration (2015–2023). Although the study considers variation over time, the primary strategy is to provide a narrative explanation of programme effectiveness and the conditions under which DRR programmes can be successful. The thesis uses process-tracing techniques (George et al., 2005) to examine the OPSC and its success conditions. In terms of research methods, the dissertation relies on primary and secondary resources, including government policy documents, international and domestic NGO reports, academic literature, and media reporting (national and international). A detailed discussion of research design and methods, including data analysis and data collection methods, is provided in Chapter Four.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Operation Safe Corridor's (OPSC) deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration (DRR) programme has been running since 2016 and has graduated over 2000 clients. The call for investigation remains effective due to ongoing attacks in Northern Nigeria and the rise of other insurgent groups. The Buhari administration consistently reports on the success of OPSC despite the continuous insurgent attacks and continued military operations in the region.

Existing academic work primarily focuses on studying the operation and structure of OPSC. Omotuyi (2020) analysed OPSC as a counterinsurgency strategy, Ogunnubi (2024) researched the process of OPSC, while Ugwueze et al. (2020) conducted a key informant analysis of OPSC. The study identified a gap in the research on Nigeria's deradicalisation approach.

Given these points, there is a need for an evaluative study to assess the effectiveness of OPSC in achieving its objectives of deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration. The researcher plans to conduct an evaluative study to determine which aspects of OPSC are successful and identify areas that require improvement, with an analysis of the conditions of success from its theoretical study.

The strength of this research lies in its multi-practitioner, multi-theory, multi-stakeholder approach to analysing the success of OPSC. Using process tracing, this study examines the single case of OPSC, identifies the conditions for success, and makes valuable academic contributions relevant to governments combating violent extremism with the non-kinetic approach of OPSC. It will also benefit security experts and serve as a valuable reference tool for the academic and research communities in future studies.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

This dissertation consists of seven chapters that address the question, “Under what conditions can deradicalisation programmes such as Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) be considered effective in achieving their goals of deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration?” These chapters are used to answer the sub-question raised in the study. Chapter one introduces the dissertation, stating the problem, objectives, and research question it aims to answer.

Chapter two focuses on conceptual clarification, answering the question “What is the conceptual basis of deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration programmes?”

Chapter three details the dissertation’s theoretical framework, examining practitioner and academic viewpoints on OPSC. It identifies conditions for success from institutions and theoretical perspectives, answering the question: “What are the conditions for successful deradicalisation, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes that are identified within existing practitioner approaches and theoretical frameworks?”

Chapter four outlines the methodology and research design, which is a qualitative study. The research used narrative process tracing to evaluate the single case study of Operation Safe Corridor within the specified period of 2015-2023. This timeframe is significant because 2015 marked a pivotal shift in Nigeria’s political landscape, from a dominant ruling party to the opposition under President Muhammadu Buhari, whose administration introduced Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) as a strategy to combat insurgency and violent extremism.

Chapter five examines the Nigerian context of OPSC, explains the main features of OPSC, and answers the question “What are the main features of OPSC as a DRR programme in Nigeria?”

Chapter six answers two research questions: “How has OPSC been evaluated by government and non-governmental stakeholders in Nigeria and internationally?” and “What empirical conditions characterised the implementation of OPSC in Nigeria, particularly regarding programme design, incentives for former combatants, and community acceptance?” Answers were provided by analysing government sources, international and domestic nongovernmental organisation reports, local media, and explaining the outcomes of hypotheses based on a multi-stakeholder analysis. To conclude, this research introduces two new concepts in deradicalisation study, “deradicalisation vicious cycle and virtuous cycle,” to explain sustainable deradicalisation and the impact of unaddressed meso- and macro-level root causes.

Chapter seven concludes the research by summarising the problem, approach, main findings, limitations, policy implications, future research, and an extensive discussion of academic contributions.

Chapter Two – Conceptual Clarification: Radicalisation and Deradicalisation

2.1 Introduction

Discussions around radicalisation, deradicalisation, and rehabilitation programmes increased since 2014, with the realisation that most countries facing insurgencies are affected by homegrown insurgents. In 2014, the European Union, for instance, encouraged members to create disengagement and exit programmes aimed at reducing individual commitment and attraction to extremist ideologies and groups (Koehler, 2017). United Nations Security Council (2014) resolution 2178:16 also served as a global call for nation-states to take personalised approaches to counter extremism and steps to decrease radicalisation.

This study views deradicalisation as an opposing response to radicalisation, as well as its underlying factors. Rehabilitation and reintegration are essential components of deradicalisation, as they aid the process. A comprehensive deradicalisation approach must address the root causes and adopt a two-way method for reintegration. Bjorgo (2009) asserts that there are cognitive and behavioural aspects of radicalisation and deradicalisation. If the cognitive aspects are radical, the individual would exhibit radical behaviour. To achieve change in radical behaviour, there must have been a change in ideological perspective. This explains that ideology influences behavioural output.

This research explains that various deradicalisation programmes exist, with similar goals of deradicalising and reintegrating ex-insurgents and extremists into society globally, as there is no unified deradicalisation process. Countries implement their deradicalisation plans based on their experiences with insurgent groups. Individual countries' experiences cannot be generalised; Nigeria's insurgent situation differs from that of Pakistan. Therefore, a deradicalisation programme that works in "Country A" may not be directly replicated in "Country B"; instead, it can be studied to gain insights into effective processes, which could be modified and adapted for Country B's context. Various deradicalisation programmes have been implemented worldwide, each tailored to address the root causes of radicalisation specific to that context.

This chapter answers the question "What is the conceptual basis of deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration programmes? With the aim of analysing and conceptualising the

key concepts of the dissertation empirically. Understanding the empirical concept will provide a background for the Nigerian case discussed in the following chapter. This chapter conceptualises radicalisation, deradicalisation, and its factors, and recidivism.

2.2 Radicalisation before Deradicalisation

Radicalisation describes the process individual or group accepts and acts on an ideology, which is then manifested in extreme or negative forms, such as violence, disrupting the environment or state's activities (Koehler, 2017). Ideology is the set of ideas and beliefs that can be used to explain how individuals or groups act. The radicalisation ideology can be political, economic, religious, or a combination of these, forming the basis of group interaction and group's goal. An ideology can become radical when it involves the use of violent means to actualise the ideological goal. Some acts of radicalisation are physically expressed, and the most extreme radicals often use their ideology to justify their causes, which can be violent or non-violent. According to Sowale et al., (2023), radicalisation can result in an act of terror, thereby creating insurgency in the social environment.

According to Cassam (2021), the process of becoming an extremist is known as radicalisation, a cognitive process that results in behavioural actions. By behavioural action, this means the use of violent methods to actualise the set goal. Extremist ideology mindset fits into three ideological mindsets: cognitively radicalised, the adoption and acceptance of extremist ideology; behaviourally radicalised, using violent approaches; and psychologically radicalised, the combination of cognitive and behavioural radicalised mindsets. Cassam further that radicalisation occurs at three levels, individual level - a lone radicalisation agenda; group/micro level radicalisation - group of individuals, community or state level that instigate insurgent acts within a state, in the case of Boko Haram in Nigeria and the final level is the National/Macro level, this explains radicalisation of the entire nation against a specific group an example is German-Nazi era.

According to Bartlett et al., (2012), as cited in Koehler (2017), two forms of radicalisation were identified: violent and non-violent radicalisation. Violent radicalisation occurs when radicalised individuals engage in brutal acts against victims through the use of violent and insurgent tactics

to accomplish their objectives; the radicalised individuals are motivated to employ forceful actions against those outside the radical cohort. Extremists can be organised to target specific victims to organise insurgent attacks such as bombing, open fire, violence based on race, ethnicity or religion. Cassam (2021) asserted that violent extremists can be called method extremists because their approach is characterised by violence used as a tool for their unjust cause, even when other resolution options are available; it is used disproportionately, against innocents. Non-violent radicalisation occurs when individuals hold extremist beliefs but do not resort to violence to express or uphold their views. Supporting an economic, political, or religious idea without violence is an example. Non-violent actions include peaceful protests, boycotts, strike actions, among others. Radicalisation may not be a crime or unlawful; it becomes illegal when it turns violent, threatens public safety, damages property, or breaches the principles of the state.

Ogunubi et al. (2022) summarised radicalisation as the process, activities, motivation, and action that lead an individual to become an extremist. Doosje et al. (2016) classified radical groups into five broad types: nationalist and separatist groups, extreme right-wing groups, extreme left-wing groups, single-issue groups, and religiously motivated groups. The nationalistic group aims to secure their territorial space for their people, for example, Israel/Gaza, Russia /Ukraine, Nigeria/Biafra. Extreme right-wing acts in the interest of a race, for example, the case of Germany, an extreme left-wing group acts to challenge economic inequalities and capitalism. Single-issue groups aim to address and fight for a particular issue or interest, such as Women's rights, Taxes. Religiously motivated group uses religion to justify acts of violence.

2.2.1 Factors of Radicalisation

Radicalisation does not occur in isolation; there are fundamental factors that contribute to violent radicalisation. Underlying causes differ across regions, with primary reasons varying by area and different forms present. Various events, experiences, and factors enable the development of radicalisation. Countries experiencing insurgency can recognise societal drivers, which combine economic, political, and socio-economic elements, creating push and pull factors that influence radicalisation.

Schmid (2013) identified micro, meso, and macro-level root causes of radicalisation. Micro level explains an individual's drive to be involved in radical ideology, issues with identity, unsuccessful assimilation, humiliation, stigmatisation, prejudice and a sense of the need for vengeance. At the meso-level, root causes are explained through an enabling environment, where the community shares similar experiences and feelings that can drive radicalisation; for example, the youth in the community all agree on the disparity in socio-economic development compared to the abundance of natural resources. The macro level addresses a broader scope, encompassing both domestic and international issues; socio-economic ideologies, political issues influencing public opinion, religious minorities and majority, etc. Factors beyond individual and community control, within the authority of constituted authorities and international frameworks. Schmid explained the need not to overly focus on micro-level root cause analysis, highlighting the skewness of the government's focus on the micro level during deradicalisation, with minimal attention to the meso level, while largely neglecting the macro-level actual root cause that encourages radicalisation. Schmid's (2013) micro, meso, and macro classification will serve as a significant reference for analysis in this dissertation.

Doosje et. al (2016) explained three phases of radicalisation. The initial phase is the period of awareness of the radical ideology; second phase is when individuals join the radical group, and third phase occurs when radicalised individuals are ready to act in the interest of the radical group. Horgan (2008) argued that socio-psychological dynamics exist between push and pull factors, as well as individual pathways into radicalisation, are inherent in society. Vargani et al. (2020) and Cassam (2021) explained the push, pull, and personal factors of radicalisation.

This research used the case of Nigeria to explain Horgan (2008) Vargani et.al (2020) and Cassam (2021), the push factors are deprivation from the state, these are the factors exhibited within the state that push the individual or group to join the extremist group; unappealing factors from the state, these include, lack of social justice, economic inequality, grievance, marginalization, poverty, lack of education, corruption, unemployment, can be said to be the primary driving push factors. Pull factors are those elements that make an extremist group appealing to an individual; these factors include social identity, a sense of belonging, and incentives. In the case of insurgency in Northern Nigeria, protection and incentives are among the primary factors that attract

individuals. Personal factors, especially in cases of individual radicalisation, are psychological, behavioural, and cognitive traits unique to an individual that contribute to their radicalisation. Radicalisation into Boko haram can be said to be a combination of push, pull and inhibiting factors.

2.3 Conceptualising Deradicalisation

Various deradicalisation initiatives have been introduced worldwide since the beginning of the 21st century. The term deradicalisation has gained popularity in discussions about insurgency and terrorism and is widely recognised as a method of counterterrorism and counter-radicalisation. Currently, it has become one of the first steps in resolving extremism through peaceful means. Deradicalisation is a global mechanism that counteracts violent extremism around the world. In counterterrorism, governments' commitment to ensure that antiterrorism strategies adhere to and do not violate international laws on human rights, humanitarian concerns, and refugee protection (Koehler 2017, Human Rights Watch 2003).

Cassam (2021) described deradicalisation as a planned process of preventing or reversing radicalisation. He further distinguished between counter-radicalisation and deradicalisation. Counter-radicalisation refers to measures implemented by the government or an established body to prevent radicalisation. This can include PREVENT duties (the United Kingdom's counter-radicalisation CONTEST approach), addressing socio-economic and political push factors within the state, among others. Deradicalisation involves the process of correcting and reversing radicalisation that has already taken place. Its aim is to counter extremist ideology and prevent violence. Ogunubi et al. (2022) also differentiate between counter-radicalisation and deradicalisation; the former as a proactive preventive approach that stops radicalisation in the community, while the latter is a reactive approach employed by the state after radicalisation has occurred.

According to David Koehler (2017), deradicalisation can be described as a process of cognitive re-evaluation and modification of an extremist ideology to a more liberal, moderate, and secular perspective. Deradicalisation aims to achieve a shift in ideology, especially from extremism that supports the use of violence. Each nation has its own unique deradicalisation framework shaped

by specific characteristics of radicalisation and influencing factors. While deradicalisation can be seen as a form of disengagement, it goes beyond merely stopping harmful actions, as it addresses the fundamental ideological roots of radicalisation. An ex-insurgent might disengage from insurgent activities but remain radicalised. Merely disengaging insurgent members does not necessarily mean they have been deradicalised. Disengagement relates to behaviour and actions, whereas deradicalisation involves both ideological and behavioural change. Deradicalisation is considered successful when an ex-insurgent disengages from their extremist ideology, changes their perspective, and is effectively reintegrated into the community. Deradicalisation programmes are not only a soft approach used by states to manage and eradicate extremism and insurgency, but also a strategic counterinsurgency method involving planned rehabilitation programmes aimed at achieving reintegration with minimal recidivism. Deradicalisation and reintegration programmes should consider community perspectives when planning reintegration (Gordon et al., 2018).

Deradicalisation is the complete elimination of extreme ideologies (Dechesne, 2011). Deradicalisation comprises set of strategies and procedures designed by authorities to encourage individuals or groups with radical ideologies to abandon them and refrain from acting against the state. Through deradicalisation, an ex-insurgent recognises the secularity of ideologies, beliefs and human rights of others - victims. Deradicalisation programmes are crucial for internal security in insurgent states, as they help de-escalate and minimise the recurrence of insurgent acts through rehabilitation. These programmes serve as established frameworks to counter violent extremism and hostile ideologies within the state. The government uses deradicalisation and rehabilitation frameworks to regulate extreme ideologies within the state (International Crisis Group, 2021; El-said, 2015).

When planning deradicalisation programmes, it is crucial to consider the wider environment that contributed to radicalisation, particularly its root causes. Koehler (2017) and Schmid (2013) note that radicalisation often flourishes because the state fails to address social and economic deficiencies. Extremist groups exploit these gaps to expand their ideologies and recruit vulnerable individuals. The susceptibility of these individuals mainly results from existing political instability, socioeconomic hardships, and other factors that foster conditions for radicalisation.

This study defines deradicalisation as an ideological and psychological process of delinking and relinking. Using the understanding that radicalisation is the process of adopting extreme ideological beliefs and acting on them, deradicalisation involves removing extremist ideology from individuals or groups that hold those beliefs. When planning a deradicalisation programme, it is essential to consider questions such as whether there is a triggering factor that leads an individual to hold extreme ideological beliefs. Particularly in a secular country like Nigeria, what could cause someone to become radicalised against the state? Can poverty be deemed a triggering factor in north-eastern Nigeria? Deradicalisation helps to understand the pull factors of terrorist groups and offers peaceful alternatives to dissuade further radicalisation.

Additionally, this study conceptualised deradicalisation as a spectrum; on one end of the spectrum, it can be a tool to prevent radicalisation in society, and on the other end, it represents an approach to deradicalise radicalised individuals as a counterterrorism strategy.

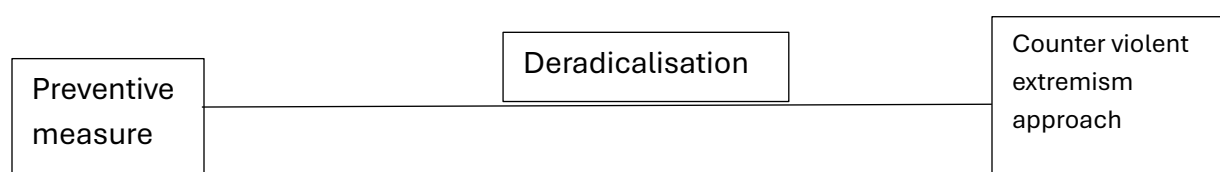


Diagram 1: Rebecca Amisu Deradicalisation Chart

It is important to recognise that there is no universal process for implementing deradicalisation programmes; these initiatives are often tailored to individual states, as there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Countries develop deradicalisation strategies and frameworks that address their specific needs. The UNOCT reference guide (2018) advised studying other countries' frameworks and then using this understanding to develop a context-specific deradicalisation programme. Examples of countries with low recidivism rates that have implemented deradicalisation programmes worldwide include Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Egypt, and others. Saudi Arabia's deradicalisation approach may not achieve the same success elsewhere, even within another Muslim state. Additionally, the Saudi model cannot be applied to non-theological or individualised deradicalisation efforts. Despite widespread disagreement among academics and experts regarding the fundamental aspects of designing, implementing, and evaluating

deradicalisation programmes, numerous initiatives have been launched globally. It is also worth noting that nations often examine each other's policies and programmes as models to gauge the effectiveness of deradicalisation efforts. This approach enables countries to learn from one another while developing their own tailored strategies (Cassam 2021, Koehler 2017, Hettiarachchi, 2013)

Rehabilitation can be explained as outlined deradicalisation programmes and activities aimed at deradicalising ex-insurgent members. These programmes, depending on the type of radicalisation, combine social, religious, and economic activities to engage and deradicalise ex-insurgent members while at correctional facilities, mainstream prisons or designated centres. It includes educating former insurgents about human rights, secularism, psychological evaluation, skill acquisition to create employment opportunities, and financial assistance (Koehler, 2015; 2017; Silke, 2011). Reintegration is the final stage and goal of deradicalisation programmes. It involves transitioning from deradicalisation and rehabilitation programmes to transitioning into and integrating with the community. Community acceptance is crucial for a successful reintegration; the community's attitude towards reintegrated individuals determines the level of interaction that reintegrated ex-insurgents can have within the community.

Among the effects of deradicalisation on extremist groups, according to Koehler (2017), is the reduction in recruitment and manpower. Extreme radicals will not be able to organise attacks if deradicalisation is prompt. The impact of the decline in individual manpower is also influenced by the authority or manpower level of the member who left the group. Intelligence gathering is essential to win wars. Deradicalisation and rehabilitation programmes also serve as opportunities for intelligence and knowledge gathering. With human intelligence collected from defectors in the radicalisation programme, the government can act on the intelligence gathered to dismantle operations and the inner workings of the extremist group. Through this, the government gains insight into the group's psychology, ideologies, and intelligence. A deradicalisation programme should establish a framework to harness information; voluntary information sharing should be encouraged, not coerced, as the credibility of personal information often cannot be verified. Protection should also be considered or provided for defectors who voluntarily choose to give in-depth human intelligence against the extremist group.

2.3.1 Factors of Deradicalisation

Kohler (2017) identified push, pull, and inhibiting factors of deradicalisation. The push factors are factors that make the insurgent group becomes uncondusive for an insurgent member. These factors make the individual begin to consider leaving the insurgent group and extremist activities, including doubt of the justification of the group's goal, punishment and consequence by the state, burnout from violence and government repression, displeasure with the rules and laws within the insurgent group, power tussle with the group, violence within the group, disappointment with unmet expectations, and lifestyle within the group.

Pull factors refer to the positive aspects that attract an individual or group to leave an insurgent or radical group, as well as the factors that encourage individuals to disengage from extremist groups by offering attractive and appealing alternatives to a radical lifestyle. The primary pull factors are individual's realisation and desire for a better life, desire for a better identity, the need for family life and support, followed with; advancement in age, change in priorities, realisation of better choices and opportunities, involvement in political or civic engagement to address issues that led to radicalisation, the offer of deradicalisation, and reintegration support, among other positive factors. The inhibiting factors serve as obstacles to individual deradicalisation in the presence of push and pull factors. Factors that prevent an individual or group from deradicalising. This makes it difficult for individuals to leave an extremist group. Negative inhibiting factors from the group often slow and weaken an individual's decision to deradicalise from the group. Koehler (2017) explains that in some groups, it is perceived as betraying the group's ideology. Some groups react extremely to defection, while others have standing orders that information within the group should not be shared outside the group for use against it. Negative sanctions, fear of retribution from the group, lack of protection, vulnerability to attack from the group and from the presumed enemy, fear of arrest, and prosecution. Deradicalisation programmes should not focus only on push and pull factors but also on removing inhibiting barriers in other to encourage successful reintegration into society.

Cassam (2021), in the case of Islamic extremism, identified grievances within the group, unmet expectations, changes in family orientation, disillusionment with the group's ideology and

leadership, and discontent with the group's theology, when group members begin to see flaws in the group's interpretation of religious theology.

2.4 Recidivism as a Measure of Success – Deradicalisation

Recidivism is used to measure reversion. Recidivism refers to the reversion of an individual who has been previously deradicalised and rehabilitated, reverting to their pre-rehabilitation state, acting on the ideological stance before deradicalisation and reintegration. Maltz (1984) explained that recidivism occurs as a result of three categories of failures: failure of the correction programme to meet its goal, failure of the programme participant to abide by correction and live up to expectations after the programme, and failure of society to support rehabilitated individuals integrated into society.

Maltz (1984) argued that the recidivism rate should not be the sole measure of success for a deradicalisation programme. Deradicalisation programmes should have clearly defined goals that include the offenders, correctional programme or institution, and the society into which offenders will be reintegrated. Maltz emphasised the need for a comprehensive correctional approach and summarised that recidivism is not the only way to measure the success of a rehabilitation programme, but also its impact on society and how it influences future insurgent activities.

Koehler (2017) explained that disengagement (behavioural change) without ideological and psychological change during a deradicalisation programme is very likely to lead to recidivism. Recidivism cannot be measured immediately after deradicalisation, but only after stipulated years. A low recidivism rate does not necessarily indicate the success or failure of deradicalisation. The true success or failure of a deradicalisation programme can only be determined after a period of time, between eight and ten years.

This research contends that deradicalisation programmes should not end abruptly; instead, there should be consistent follow-up with former insurgents. This allows for progress monitoring after the programme and managing recidivism. Reintegration into society should be a two-way process. Just as deradicalised ex-insurgents are being prepared to rejoin the community, society must also

be ready to accept them. The community should be equipped to accommodate and adapt to the presence of ex-insurgents, thus promoting peaceful coexistence. If reintegration fails, the risk of recidivism will increase dramatically. Therefore, efforts should focus on developing a sustainable reintegration process. These efforts should extend beyond the camp to ensure society is prepared to accept ex-insurgents. The environment in which they are reintegrated should be suitable, avoiding areas with ongoing insurgent activities or families with extremist links. Additionally, regular monitoring of reintegrated individuals is crucial to minimise the risk of recidivism. A well-planned reintegration strategy that includes preparation, adaptation, and ongoing support will improve the chances of long-term success.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter is a vital part of this research, as it extensively explores the core concepts of the study, including radicalisation, deradicalisation, rehabilitation, reintegration, recidivism, and the factors affecting both radicalisation and deradicalisation. It explains that radicalisation and deradicalisation are psychological and ideological processes, which differ from disengagement, a behavioural process. The chapter also clarifies that there are corresponding push and pull factors that influence radicalisation and deradicalisation. The accurate assessment of success or failure in deradicalisation is not immediate after the programme, as time should be allowed for post-reintegration recovery to evaluate recidivism. It concludes by recommending an inclusive deradicalisation process and programme involving the community, as well as planning a post-reintegration strategy to monitor and prevent recidivism.

Chapter Three - Deradicalisation Approaches: Practitioner and Theoretical Perspectives

3.1 Introduction

To understand deradicalisation and establish a basis for the Nigerian case, it is essential to conduct an empirical analysis of deradicalisation frameworks. This chapter links the empirical analysis to the theoretical framework of this study, which is Social Constructivism, aligning with the methodological framework. According to Clark et al. in Bryman's social research (2021), knowledge is viewed as a construction of the researchers' version of social reality. As social constructivism entails, the research currently employs practitioner analysis and deradicalisation models to form the basis of the analysis of OPSC, investigating and explaining the deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration of ex-insurgent members.

Chapter three answers the question "What are the conditions for successful deradicalisation, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes that are identified within existing practitioner approaches and theoretical frameworks? The discussion to answer this question is divided into two sections: the practitioner approach to deradicalisation and the theoretical arguments focusing on the deradicalisation models.

The purpose of the practitioner approach is to analyse how institutions discuss deradicalisation and the practical frameworks established by these institutions. The practitioners' approach focuses on three institutions, whose discussion will be linked to the micro, meso, and macro-level root cause analysis of Schmid (2013). This chapter concludes by drawing similarities across the conditions of success identified in both the practitioner approaches and the theoretical framework.

3.2 Practitioner Approaches to Deradicalisation

The selected practitioner approaches analysed guidelines for deradicalisation programmes. The conditions of success obtained serve as a basis to analyse the premises used to evaluate Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC).

1. Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST)
2. United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism – Reference Guide

3. International Peace Institute (IPI)

3.2.1 Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST)

The Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST) guidelines for assessing effective deradicalisation programmes is a micro-level deradicalisation framework, published in 2019. It explains that the deradicalisation programme aims to address ideological and socio-personal factors that lead to violent extremism and describes how attitudinal changes are linked to decreases in extremism commitment. CREST (2019) notes that deradicalisation aims to halt continued radicalisation by supporting the social and economic reintegration of ex-insurgents into wider society. It represents a non-coercive approach that operates alongside military efforts to counter violent extremism.

CREST (2019) categorised deradicalisation programmes as tertiary intervention used to prevent further militancy. This contrasts with primary intervention, which prevents radicalisation through awareness, and secondary intervention, which targets individuals at risk of violent extremism. Nigeria's deradicalisation programme is a tertiary intervention strategy, with no effort to prevent deradicalisation through primary and secondary intervention strategies.

On design and selection of deradicalisation programmes, CREST (2019) explained that root causes of radicalisation should motivate the design and selection of deradicalisation programmes. CREST (2019) highlighted that deradicalisation initiatives should be theory-driven, with a clear model outlining aims, objectives, structure, delivery approach, and expected outcomes for evaluation purposes. CREST specified that a theory-based tertiary intervention programme must include certain combined activities;

- ideological or theological dialogue,
- one-on-one mentoring,
- mental health and trauma support,
- educational, recreational or vocational training,
- family and community engagement.

In addition, CREST (2019) underscores the importance of individualised intervention programmes and assessment should be a continuous process integrated into every stage of programme delivery.

On evaluating deradicalisation programmes, CREST acknowledges the difficulty of measuring the effects of deradicalisation efforts due to the lack of data to identify and track the specific activity that triggers change in the deradicalised individual. For reintegration, CREST advocates for family and community support to promote social and economic reintegration, which is absent in Nigeria's initiative.

3.2.1.a Conditions for Success of Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST)

1. Deradicalisation programmes should aim to address underlying socio-political factors and inhibiting factors of radicalisation
2. Deradicalisation programmes should have a clear theoretical model that outlines the aims, objectives, structure, and processes of implementation and assessment guides of the programme. Also, reintegration should include the social, political, and economic preparation and participation of deradicalised individuals in society.
3. CREST (2019) calls for evaluating individual progress and assessing the programme during its implementation. This helps ensure the programme remains on track, necessary support is provided, and the programme is modified as required.

In conclusion, CREST (2019) advocates for a theory-based deradicalisation framework with an individualised approach, incorporating regular process evaluation, while acknowledging that deradicalisation programmes could be prison-based or located at a deradicalisation centre. To avoid recidivism, CREST calls for long-term reintegration support.

3.2.2 United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) – Reference Guide - Developing National and Regional Action Plans to Prevent Violent Extremism

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) Reference Guide (2018) is a macro-level proactive strategic framework designed as a reference for UN Member States to develop country-specific actions to prevent violent extremism at the national or regional level. A shift from the

traditional counterterrorism framework, which focuses on military and law enforcement, to a paradigm shift toward prevention and social development. UNOCT (2018) revealed that kinetic approach to counter terrorism constantly fails to address the underlying conditions of violent extremism.

The United Nations Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE) Plan of Action emphasises local ownership, inclusivity, and evidence-based design. The reference guide identified three guiding principles for the development and formulation of a preventive counter-extremism action plan: overarching consideration, procedural and institutional principles and substantive principles.

- a. An overarching consideration explains the country context, enabling a developed framework to enjoy country-based ownership. United Nations and member states would only interfere based on request and consent. Overarching Principle focuses on the design, development and implementation of a National PVE.
- b. Procedural and institutional principles explain that there is no standardised PVE model; however, there are some identified procedures that can serve as a roadmap to develop PVE. The government and nongovernmental partners need an assessment by a working group to identify threats and push-and-pull factors. Procedural and institutional principles also emphasise the importance of monitoring and evaluating processes to ensure effectiveness of PVE.
- c. Substantive principles explain areas that PVE should consider for the implementation of PVE. The UN identified seven priority areas of PVE plan, which are integral to creating National and Regional Plan. For the implementation of PVE, the core components must be included in the programmes are,
 - dialogue and conflict prevention through interfaith dialogue, cultural preservation, and conflict mediation,
 - Upholding the rule of law and principles of good governance requires,
 - Engaging communities at the grassroots level to establish trust-based relationship between communities and authorities,
 - Empowering youth through vocational training and education to be agents of change beyond being a victim,

- Gender equality and women empowerment,
- Education, skills and employment to address push factors like unemployment,
- Strategic communication, responsible media to prevent extremist recruitment online

The UNOCT (2018) highlighted that focus should be on factors that facilitate the growth of violent extremism (push and pull factors), National measures to inhibit violent extremism, deradicalisation factors and respect for rights protection, and the rule of law, while combating violent extremism.

3.2.2.a Conditions for Success of United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT)

1. UNOCT stresses that counter-terrorism strategies must address the root conditions driving violent extremism, and country-specific action plans should be designed to prevent and counter extremism effectively.
2. UNOCT emphasises that there are no similar PVE plans; priorities vary among countries. The priority should be clearly addressed to avoid neglecting key areas while ensuring long-term stability.

In conclusion, the UNOCT Reference Guide (2018) provides a practical, evidence-based framework for preventive interventions to address violent extremism among Member States, focusing on prevention and reintegration. It emphasises the importance of national ownership, inclusive stakeholder engagement, and context-specific design, aligning with push and pull theory and pro-integration model.

3.2.3 International Peace Institute (IPI)

The International Peace Institute (IPI) (2010) report on deradicalisation programmes offers recommendations for developing effective counterterrorism strategies through deradicalisation and disengagement. Like CREST (2019) and UNOCT (2018), IPI (2010) emphasises that understanding the factors that motivate individuals is crucial for designing effective deradicalisation programmes. IPI (2010) defines deradicalisation as a cognitive shift away from extremist views, considering it a cost-effective counterterrorism measure, but advises that it should be part of a broader counter-extremism strategy.

1. IPI report (2010) recommends incorporating aftercare and monitoring post-integration as an important condition to sustain success, and a means to reduce recidivism. Long-term post-release planning, continued mentorship, counselling follow-up, and community support are reintegration strategies to reduce recidivism.
2. The report also emphasised the importance of addressing the root causes of radicalisation; the deradicalisation process cannot cancel the root causes of radicalisation unless they are explicitly addressed.
3. The report explained that the deradicalisation programme should be specific to context. Each programme must reflect the national culture, political climate, and specific characteristics of the target group. Programmes must be built on a clear understanding of the causes of radicalisation, on how and why individuals radicalise, taking into consideration the micro, meso and macro drivers involved.
4. IPI (2010) emphasises community involvement in deradicalisation, noting that support from civil society and religious leaders fosters acceptance and reduces isolation, relapse, and recidivism.
5. Deradicalisation should be part of broader counterterrorism approaches and be embedded as a long-term multidimensional strategy that includes social development, economic reforms, human rights protection, addressing poverty, unemployment and other structural factors.

The development of clear criteria for participation, achieved through thorough vetting, was highlighted. This can be linked to Moghaddam's (2005) studies, which explain that different levels, roles, specialisations, and hierarchies exist within the radical group. In the case study of Nigeria, only low-risk ex-insurgent members are cleared for deradicalisation, although this is contested because there is no clear set of criteria for vetting.

In conclusion, the IPI report (2010) recommends using incentives as part of a strategic approach to support deradicalisation and disengagement. These incentives, ranging from vocational training, housing, and family support, should be integrated into broader efforts to help individuals build stable lives away from violent extremist groups. However, the report warns that incentives must be carefully designed to avoid public perception that ex-insurgents are being rewarded, which could undermine community trust and jeopardise reintegration efforts. Additionally, the IPI stresses the importance of cross-border cooperation among neighbouring countries affected

by violent extremism. Such collaboration can facilitate the sharing of intelligence, skills development, and the exchange of best practices, while still respecting the specific cultural and political contexts of each country.

3.3 Comparison of Practitioner Approaches – CREST (2019), UNOCT Reference guide (2018) and IPI (2010)

This subsection presents a comprehensive comparative analysis of all the identified conditions in the practitioner approaches: Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST) (2019), United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism Reference Guide (UNOCT) (2018), and the International Peace Institute (IPI) (2010).

1. **Ideological Structure.** The practical tools agree that deradicalisation is an ideological soft response to violent extremism that extends beyond disengagement. As there is no one-size-fits-all deradicalisation model, programmes should have an ideological framework that outlines their objectives, needs assessment, operational processes, and evaluation. CREST (2019) calls for theories of change to guide structure, while UNOCT (2018) emphasises a national roadmap for programme design and implementation. IPI (2010) further emphasises the importance of continuous evaluation and rigorous vetting of participants. Collectively, these points highlight the importance of a structured, evidence-driven ideological foundation for effective deradicalisation.
2. **Root Cause Analysis.** Root cause analysis is essential for understanding the underlying factors of deradicalisation and enables the development of suitable treatments. The root cause informs solutions that are specific to the target and support a sustainable deradicalisation programme. These conditions are consistent across practitioner tools for success. Root cause analysis also allows for the ideological focus of deradicalisation programmes. It is not sustainable to deradicalise without recognising and addressing underlying factors at individual, community, and national levels.
3. **Country-specific and Individualised Approach.** UNOCT (2018) stresses that deradicalisation programmes must reflect national ownership, since radicalisation drivers are context-specific and priorities differ across states. Programmes should therefore be tailored to each country's needs

and adjusted as contexts evolve. Complementing this, CREST (2019) advocates an individualised approach, while IPI (2010) emphasises sustained individual support through timely evaluation across rehabilitation stages. An individualised process allows for in-depth assessment at each stage of deradicalisation, ensuring interventions meet the unique needs of participants while aligning with national priorities

4. Community, family support and aftercare, are central to effective deradicalisation and rehabilitation. Since reintegration is the ultimate aim, engaging families and communities fosters acceptance of ex-offenders and reduces recidivism, particularly when they understand the programme's structure (IPI, 2010). Long-term monitoring and aftercare further strengthen reintegration by tracking graduates' performance, which serves as a measure of programme credibility, strengths, and weaknesses. CREST (2019) adds that monitoring and evaluation should be publicly accessible to encourage community-wide participation, ensuring both accountability and sustained support for deradicalised individuals

3.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Deradicalisation

The theoretical perspective will analyse six models and the conditions they identify for success. The models are compared to highlight shared success factors, which provide the foundation for evaluating Nigeria's deradicalisation programme, Operation Safe Corridor. The identified deradicalisation models for theoretical analysis includes;

1. Phase Model from Insurgency
2. Pro Integration Model
3. Restorative Justice Approach
4. Prison-Based Deradicalisation
5. Push and Pull Model
6. Rational Choice Model of Deradicalisation

3.4.1 Phase Model from Insurgency

The phase model is a psychological interpretation of the process of radicalisation and deradicalisation. It suggests that both radicalisation and deradicalisation happen gradually, in

stages. These stages explain how an individual becomes involved or disengages from radicalisation and deradicalisation. In each stage, specific psychological processes influence this commitment (Mann et al., 2020). To illustrate the phase model, the Moghaddam staircase model will be analysed.

Moghaddam Staircase Model – Phase Model from Insurgency

Moghaddam (2005; 2009) developed the staircase model to explain the psychological process of radicalisation and deradicalisation. The staircase illustrates movement from the ground floor to the highest floor- the fifth floor, to explain how the process of radicalisation manifests into violent attacks. Radicalisation occurs with an upward movement, while deradicalisation from violent extremism involves processes and programmes organised to descend from any level on the staircase to violent extremism where an insurgent person is located.

Moghaddam (2009) explained that for successful deradicalisation, the programmes should be tailored to the level an individual is located on the staircase to radicalisation. This suggests that deradicalisation plans and programmes for an insurgent member at the highest level would be different from those for someone on the ground floor or first level. Secondly, he explained that the importance of considering the role of the ex-insurgent within the group when planning the deradicalisation programme.

Similar to CREST (2019), phase model also calls for an individualised deradicalisation programme following careful psychological assessment, profiling, examination of radicalisation level, duration, and role in the radical group, as well as radicalising push and pull factors.

It is worth noting that nearly all deradicalisation and rehabilitation frameworks incorporate psychological analysis in deradicalisation programmes. Sudan and Pakistan utilise an intellectual dialogue approach to psychologically analyse the participants' personalities, understanding of jihad and level of involvement. Based on the information retrieved during psychological evaluation, insurgent members in Pakistan were grouped into four established categories by the deradicalisation programme - low risk, medium risk, high risk and very high risk. Also, in Sri Lanka, psychological and creative therapies were one of the central tenets of the

deradicalisation and rehabilitation programme. (Abdalla, 2019; Koehler, 2017; Hettiarachchi, 2013; Koehler, 2017).

3.4.1.a Conditions for success - Phase Model from Insurgency

Conditions for the success of deradicalisation programmes, according to the phase model-staircase, can be summarised.

The deradicalisation team needs to classify individuals by their level of engagement, role, and area of specialisation within the insurgent group. For a successful deradicalisation, psychological evaluation for profiling is crucial for understanding the role and level of the individual within the insurgent group.

The length of the deradicalisation programme should not be generalised; the duration should be based on the outcome of a psychological evaluation, taking into account the level and role the individual played in the insurgent group. This explained that an ex-insurgent member who is on the highest level in the insurgent group should not have the same timeframe as a new entrant or an individual with a less violent or intensive role.

In the case of Nigeria, beyond classifying repentant insurgent members into low- and high-risk categories, the phase model argues that classification should go further by considering the psychological level, role, and level of involvement of the repentant member to create an individualised deradicalisation plan.

3.4.2 Pro-Integration Model (PIM) - Nonlinear Deradicalisation Model

Pro-integration model (PIM) views deradicalisation as a process of identity transformation, where an individual transitions from being an outgroup member of society to identifying as an ingroup member. The transition process back into the community involves forming new social relationships, coping within the community, building a new identity distinct from that of the extremist group, identifying with the community's ideology, and engaging in positive actions

within the community to sustain integration (Barrella 2015). The Pro Integration Model (PIM) focuses on individual disengagement and reintegrating back into the community. It can be classified as a micro-level focused deradicalisation model.

Barrella (2015) theorised the Pro-integration Model (PIM) of deradicalisation as a non-linear model of disengagement from violent extremism and reintegration. This explains that disengagement and deradicalisation cannot follow a linear pathway; this illustrates that individual experiences are unique, with different starting and ending points, and no individual is expected to be at the same level across all domains. The primary objective of PIM is sustained reintegration.

Barrella (2015) asserted that a combination of multiple push and pull factors influences deradicalisation. She identified fifteen theme factors that serve as push factors that encourage deradicalisation from violent extremist groups; the top five include disillusionment with the behaviour of group leaders, disillusionment with the behaviour of group members, burnout, and excessive violence.

Barrella (2015) maintains that social relations are vital in PIM as they indicate the level of integration after deradicalisation and highlight three levels of societal engagement upon reintegration into society.

Minimal level of engagement: ex-insurgent is deradicalised but do not wish to interact with mainstream society

Cautious level of engagement: ex-insurgent is careful with engagement in society - a mid-level engagement

Positive level of engagement: ex-insurgent engages fully in society; complete integration has been achieved, covering all themes and domains.

PIM explains that the movement across all societal engagement can be influenced by the community's preparedness to accept former insurgent members, emphasising that the community's attitude towards ex-insurgent members influences the level of engagement.

Barralle's theory is essential in planning the reintegration aspect of the deradicalisation programme to support community and family involvement with ex-insurgent members.

Condition for Success - Pro-Integration Model

Similar to the phase model, the Pro integration model emphasised an individualistic approach to deradicalisation, the importance of understanding individual unique experiences to plan a holistic deradicalisation and rehabilitation programme. While the phase model argues that levels and roles are important when planning deradicalisation, PIM argues that a combination of pull, push and inhibiting factors influences deradicalisation. For a holistic deradicalisation, the root cause of radicalisation should be addressed to avoid recidivism after reintegration.

The PIM model views deradicalisation as a holistic process that includes reintegration. The PIM advocates for the highest level of engagement after post-integration. The primary difference between the Phase model and the Pro-integration model is that the latter incorporates reintegration and emphasises different levels of engagement during the process.

3.4.3 Restorative Justice Approach

This research explains that the restorative justice (RJ) approach as a de-radicalisation method in which victims and offenders meet to discuss the reasons, impact, and effects of violent extremism in an organised setting through an established reconciliation process to achieve closure. The purpose of a restorative meeting is to facilitate some form of restoration for both parties involved; it provides the victim with the opportunity to tell the offender how their actions have affected the victim's life, to ask questions about the motivating factors behind the extremist act, and to seek an apology from the offender while reinforcing the deradicalisation pathway of the offender. The Restorative Justice approach can be classified as a meso-level de-radicalisation model, as its primary success factor is community engagement and restorative interaction between the involved parties.

The restorative process, according to Hopkin (2004), includes restorative enquiry, discussion in challenging situations, meditation, victim/offender mediation, community conferences, problem-solving circles, restorative conferences, and family group conferences.

Gabby (2008) asserted that the restorative justice system views the effect of insurgency on the harm caused to the victim rather than on the violated norm. With restitution, RJ focuses on the impact of violent extremism in an insurgent environment, rather than extremism on the victim. To Zehr (2008), restorative justice aims for repair, reconciliation, and reassurance. Consent to participate is an integral condition for the success of any restorative process. The process of restorative justice has a positive effect on the recidivism rate (Hehiarachchi, 2013).

Llewellyn et al. (1999) described restorative justice as a forward-looking approach, aiming for the best outcome in rehabilitation and reintegration for a functioning community and as a transformative method of addressing violent extremism. In this context, affected parties engage in dialogue to repair social relationships and establish a positive, forward-moving connection. It facilitates the development of a constructive and progressive relationship (Llewellyn et al., 1999; Gabby, 2005).

Sri Lanka's rehabilitation programme adopted a restorative justice approach that facilitates meetings between ex-combatants and victims of insurgent activity to foster victim-perpetrator dialogue. Beneficiaries can see the victims of their radical actions, observe the destructive impact of those actions, realise how harmless the presumed enemies (victims) are, and realise the unjust situation caused by their radical behaviour. Through this dialogue and exposure to the victims' environment, beneficiaries begin to understand and embrace cultural and worldview diversity. Sri Lankan rehabilitation also includes organised community visits and a structured community transfer and handover ceremony, involving families and the broader community. This event is celebrated to promote community participation and acceptance (Hettiarachchi, 2013).

On the contrary, the retributive justice approach focuses on guilt and punishment, explaining that punishing extremist members is necessary to achieve justice (Llewellyn et al., 1999). In the case of Nigeria, the affected communities clamour for retributive justice for Boko haram's ex-insurgent members with the belief that the Nigerian government is granting ex-insurgent members soft

landing through the Operation Safe Corridor programme. This has made the reintegration and community acceptance of ex-insurgents challenging (Clubb, 2018).

Conditions for Success - Restorative Justice Model

Consent is the primary condition for the success of the restorative justice approach, the willingness of both parties to participate. Neither victims of insurgency nor offenders should be coerced into participating in the restitution process.

There is a weak implementation of the Restorative justice approach in Nigeria's Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) as it lacks the involvement and participation of victims of insurgency, which is one of the challenges of OPSC. Victims of insurgency clamour for retributive justice while OPSC implements a one-sided restorative justice approach, which does not involve the community.

3.4.4 Prison-Based Deradicalisation Approach

Before studying prison-based deradicalisation, based on my research into different deradicalisation programmes across countries, I had already concluded that prison-based deradicalisation is a form of deradicalisation that takes place in a designated location. This research analysed two types of prison-based deradicalisation: prison-based deradicalisation centres and mainstream prisons for offenders. At the deradicalisation centre, ex-insurgent members go through deradicalisation and rehabilitation process that includes counselling, psychological evaluation, skills acquisition and preparation for reintegration. My preliminary understanding aligned with Operation Safe Corridor (Nigeria's deradicalisation and rehabilitation framework), with its deradicalisation camp situated in Gombe state in Nigeria, where extremists are separated from the mainstream prison population.

Prison-based deradicalisation is beyond designated deradicalisation centres or camps. It discusses the dynamics of extremists in "prisons". With focus on different radical extremists in various prisons and radicalisation centres. (Stern et al., 2020; Asori et. al., 2019; Speckhard, 2021). They argued that if mainstream prison is not adequately managed, it could facilitate recruitment into extremist networks. This occurs when incarcerated extremists use the period to spread their

extremist ideology. According to Silke (2014), in Stern et al. (2020), there is a significant influence of extremists in prison. Silke (2014) asserted that even though there are fewer extremists in prison, they have a remarkable ability to influence ordinary prisoners to their ideology and that prison strengthens incarcerated extremists; they stand by their cause, believing they are incarcerated for a just cause. In religious extremist situations, prisons usually serve as breeding places. Stern (2020) cited case of leaders of Islamic states in Iraq and Syria who were incarcerated in a US-run detention centre, who went to prison as minor extremists but came out of prison as more radical extremists and thereafter became top-ranking members of the extremist group. This caused the arguments that mainstream prisons often become a breeding ground for followers when extremists are in the same prison with liberal offenders.

In response to the challenge of violent extremism in mainstream prisons, many states have developed prison-based deradicalisation centres. Their objective is twofold: to curb the circulation of extremist ideology within correctional facilities and to facilitate the reintegration of former extremists into society. Nigeria's Operation Safe Corridor camp is designated for the deradicalisation of Boko Haram violent extremists.

Sudan also implemented a prison-based deradicalisation programme due to the failure of the security and law enforcement approach. Sudan's programme includes intellectual religious dialogue, counselling seminars, psychological assessments, and reintegration efforts. The deradicalisation initiative took place in a designated centre. (Abdalla, 2019; Koehler, 2017). In 2004, Saudi Arabia introduced a prison-based deradicalisation programme centred on religious re-education and counselling. The initiative aimed to change insurgents' ideological views of jihad by engaging subject-matter experts who offered reinterpretations of the Quran. (Horgan et al. 2012; Capstack, 2015; Koehler, 2017).

Sri Lanka's deradicalisation and rehabilitation is one of the few cases not based on religious ideology but on ethno-nationalist struggles. Sri Lanka established a deradicalisation and rehabilitation centre named Protective Accommodation and Rehabilitation Centres (PARC) (Hettiarachchi, 2013; Koehler, 2017). Similarly, Pakistan's deradicalisation programme took place in a centre called De-Radicalisation and Emancipation Programmes (DREPs). Kohler (2017) stated

that deradicalisation centres and programmes are usually created when there are large numbers of radicalised persons and in cases of ethnic or religious radicalisation.

In countries, including the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Jordan, prison-based deradicalisation programmes are incorporated into mainstream prison systems, since the number of extremists is relatively small. The scale of extremist populations frequently influences whether rehabilitation is pursued within ordinary prisons or through dedicated deradicalisation centres. (Speckhard 2011).

Conditions for Success - Prison-Based Deradicalisation

Population and ideology are key factors influencing whether a deradicalisation programme is conducted in a deradicalisation centre or within a mainstream prison. In countries like Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan, the number of insurgents and radicals was substantial; deradicalising them within mainstream prisons would mean that other inmates would form a minority and might be exposed to radicalisation.

Prison-based deradicalisation typically involves religious re-education, faith-based counselling, and rehabilitation programmes focused on these needs. In contrast, mainstream prisons generally lack a religious or ideological focus. Deradicalisation centres offer a controlled environment with a clear focus on ideological transformation. Examples of countries where population size and religious ideology influence deradicalisation strategies include Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Somalia, and Indonesia.

3.4.5 Push and Pull Model

Similar to Maghamdam (2005), Bjorgo (2009) corroborated that different roles, levels, and specialisations exist within violent extremist groups. The push and pull model is an individualist approach to explaining deradicalisation from violent extremism. According to Bjørgo (2009) push factors are adverse social conditions that make remaining in the extremist group and ideology undesirable. Pull factors are incentives and opportunities that attract an individual to deradicalise and change their lifestyle.

Bjørger (2009) argues that individuals who have spent only a short time within an extremist group find it relatively easier to disengage, as they are less exposed to the group's inner workings, ideologies and have not developed deep bonds of trust or confidentiality. In contrast, disengagement becomes significantly more difficult for individuals who have become highly socialised into the group's norms or hold positions of influence within its hierarchy. Bjørger uses this distinction to explain the concepts of "bounded" and "unbounded" group membership within extremist organisations. Horgan (2009) explained in *Walking Away from terrorism* that disengagement from violent extremism is not the same as deradicalisation. This shows that an individual can reduce their involvement in extremist activities without abandoning the extremist ideology

Push factors identified by Bjørger (2009) includes;

Negative reactions from society, mainly through social sanctions, cause individuals involved in extremism to reconsider their involvement with extremist groups. Bjørger (2009) suggested that such pressure should be combined with constructive alternatives to support deradicalisation, reintegration, and a stronger sense of community belonging. Notably, these negative reactions seem to have a greater impact on new recruits than on more experienced members.

Disillusionment with the group's ideology and activities is a significant push factor; extremist members begin to question their beliefs in the group's ideology and reassess their reasons for joining.

The nature and level of the violence perpetrated by the group also acts as a push factor, especially when it exceeds what is justified by the group's ideology, such as violence against children, the elderly, etc. In the case of Boko Haram in Nigeria, discord arose when violence extended to victims of the same faith as the extremists. Fear of reprisals from security forces also drives disengagement, especially when it exceeds an individual's tolerance. Such pressures appear to have stronger impact on new recruits than on experienced members.

Exhaustion and fatigue from group activities are also noted as reasons for disengagement. Emotional and physical exhaustion over time, caused by reprisals from opposing groups and security forces. This toll can undermine the stability of group members and lead to burnout.

Bjorgo (2009) explained pull factors as including:

The desire for a normal life is often driven by fatigue from continuous extremist activities, which lead to a change in role within the group, disengagement, or even deradicalisation. According to Bjorgo (2009), the most influential pull factor is the desire to establish a family and develop personal relationships. This is significant because it fosters ongoing contact with the out-group, facilitating a shift in priorities and loyalty, which further encourages individuals to leave extremist groups.

According to Bjorgo (2009) disengagement occurs in extremist groups in three ways: the first is a direct break from the extremist group, mainly carried out by high-ranking members; the second involves breaking away from the group without renouncing the ideology – this explains when a former insurgent ceases to participate in group activities but still adheres to the group's ideology; and lastly is a gradual and quiet withdrawal, often more common among less known and less active extremist members.

Although the push and pull model is often framed at the individual level, Bjørgo (2009, 2005), Horgan (2019) argue that certain conditions can trigger collective disengagement. Internal dissatisfaction, interpersonal conflict, ideological disputes, questions of legitimacy, excessive violence, and leadership struggles all generate discontent that may lead to mass defections or voluntary surrender for deradicalisation. While neither push nor pull factors alone are sufficient, their interaction provides a powerful motivation for members to exit extremist groups.

Conditions for Success - Push and Pull Model

Deradicalisation programme should offer realistic and attractive alternatives to ex-extremist members to encourage them to be deradicalised. A comprehensive, structured programme that combines psychological, educational and structural would increase the success of the deradicalisation programme. Inhibiting factors should be addressed to protect deradicalised members from both the extremist group and the community.

The implementation of deradicalisation programmes should extend to include reintegration into society by involving the community in the deradicalisation process, as a wide range of community

support is crucial for successful reintegration. Reintegration is strengthened when the community welcomes and supports ex-insurgent members.

The push and pull model would fail if there are no strong, significant negative factors within the extremist group, and when there are no positive push and pull factors facilitating disengagement and deradicalisation. This essentially means that the success of the push and pull model depends on the failure of the push and pull factors that contribute to radicalisation.

3.4.6 Rational Choice Model of Deradicalisation

The Rational Choice Model (RCM) explains that individuals make decisions after weighing potential costs and benefits to maximise personal utility and satisfaction (Green, 2002). This explains that radicalisation and deradicalisation are associated with specific benefits. To deradicalise, RCM explains that extremists disengage when the cost of extremism outweighs the benefits.

Crenshaw (1981) explained that for violent extremist acts to occur, there are significant predicaments and precipitants. These are described as factors that enable violent extremist (VE) acts and factors that sustain them. They serve as opportunities for violent extremism to happen. Existing preconditions are societal factors, while precipitants are direct causes and also include sustaining factors.

Crenshaw (1981) explained terrorism as a deliberate, calculated decision made by political actors. She asserts that terrorism is often a “logical means to advance desired ends,” implying that disengagement may also result from a strategic revaluation of goals and means. Flipping Crenshaw (1981), cause of terrorism to analyze causes of deradicalisation, one would say if joining the violent extremist groups is considered to an end, leaving it (disengaging and deradicalising) such a group is also strategic and premeditated as a means to an end and a new start to reintegrate back into the community. Deradicalisation is a strategy, a means to end violent extremism.

Fink et al. (2008) discuss deradicalisation primarily through the lens of individual motivation and programmatic responses. While they do not explicitly invoke rational choice theory, their analysis reflects its principles. They emphasise that individuals often disengage when the perceived costs of continued extremist involvement outweigh the benefits, and when credible, appealing

alternatives become available. These voluntary exits are described as strategic, mainly when supported by reintegration opportunities, amnesty, or psychosocial support. In this framework, deradicalisation is less about ideological transformation and more about a rational re-evaluation of one's interests and prospects.

Conditions for Success - Rational Choice Model of Deradicalisation

Since deradicalisation is associated with specific benefits, deradicalisation efforts and programmes should be designed to emphasise these benefits while minimising the perceived advantages of continued involvement in extremist groups. The predictor factors that influence violent extremism, as explained by Crenshaw (1981), should be addressed to make violent extremism an unattractive option, highlighting the personal costs and effects on the extremist. When the cost of remaining in or joining an extremist group is astronomical and outweighs the benefits, change is more likely.

The availability of positive alternatives influences individual cost and risk analysis, reinforcing the pursuit of personal stability (Fink et al, 2008; Crenshaw, 1981). Credible and rewarding alternatives should be made available to encourage sustainable deradicalisation. These alternatives should include material support such as employment, housing, educational assistance, vocational skills training, social benefits, and family support; all pathways to integration free of stereotypes. Deradicalisation must be communicated effectively to achieve better outcomes.

3.5 Comparison of the Theoretical Perspectives

1. **Deradicalisation as a process.** The theoretical models all view deradicalisation as a gradual process aimed at achieving deradicalisation, and reintegration outcomes. Moghaddam's (2005) staircase model suggests that radicalisation and deradicalisation involve psychological processes influenced by movement between roles and levels within the insurgent group. Barrella (2015) examined engagement levels after reintegration in the pro-integration model to explain deradicalisation as the process of transitioning back into the community, with stages of disengagement. The restorative justice approach suggests that deradicalisation can be achieved

through a formal reconciliation process. The models identify deradicalisation as a psychological process that involves the de-idealisation of radicalism to reinforce deradicalisation programmes (Hopkin 2004; Zehr 2008).

2. **Deradicalisation is individual-based.** Moghaddam (2005), explained that deradicalisation programmes should be tailored to the individual level on the staircase to deradicalisation. Barrella (2015) corroborated, in the pro-integration model, that individual experiences are unique, explaining that in a radical group, individuals have different starting and ending points due to their personal, psychological, and ideological uniqueness. The Restorative Justice model emphasised consent as an individual decision and is essential to the success of deradicalisation. Bjorgo (2009), in the push and pull model, explained that personal decisions drive radicalisation and deradicalisation; no one is born an extremist, the act is absorbed and inculcated. The Rational Choice model, as described by Crashaw (1981), views deradicalisation as an outcome of personal decisions made after analysing the risks associated with violent extremism while considering appealing alternatives. Therefore, deradicalisation involves a series of individual considerations.
3. **Rehabilitation and structural support.** The theoretical models agreed that identity transformation occurs through rehabilitation, which involves re-education, religious dialogue, counselling, psychological evaluation, and learning vocational skills. Rehabilitation benefits influence the rational choice to join a deradicalisation programme. All the models emphasise the importance of rehabilitation support during the deradicalisation process.
4. **Reintegration as the ultimate goal.** The theoretical models all aim for an inclusive reintegration, supported by community members, with minimal recidivism. Identity transformation from being a violent extremist to an integrated member of society. According to Barrella (2015), Pro-integration theory, a complete level of integration would occur when a positive level of engagement is achieved. Social reintegration and community acceptance are the primary goals of all deradicalisation programmes.

3.6 Analysis of Conditions for Success across Practitioners' Approaches and Theoretical Models

This section analyses the conditions of success derived from the practitioner approaches and the theoretical models discussed in the previous headings. This discussion here would serve as the premise for the evaluation of Nigeria's Operation Safe Corridor.

- 1. Theory and ideology-based approaches are crucial.** For a successful deradicalisation programme, understanding the radical ideological framework is essential for designing a deradicalisation ideology that influences the programme's development. The theoretical and ideological framework must be established to underpin the structure of the deradicalisation programme, including its goals, objectives, and evaluation process. Radicalism and insurgent actions often originate from the group's underlying ideology, which can be religious, socio-economic, or ethno-nationalist. This indicates that the deradicalisation framework should be developed to correct the group's radical ideology. Success would be limited, and there would be a mismatch if only socio-economic measures were employed to address a religious-based radical group's demands. A combined approach using religious and socio-economic frameworks can form the basis of the deradicalisation ideology (UNOCT 2018, IPI 2010, Moghaddam 2005, CREST 2018).
- 2. Root cause analysis.** Moving beyond the superficial push and pull factors of radicalisation, but investigating to uncover the underlying structural, social, political, economic, and psychological factors that propel an individual towards violent extremism. Effective root cause analysis allows interventions to be context-specific rather than generic or reactive. Schmid (2013) revealed that government focus is often skewed towards micro-level solutions while ignoring macro causes of radicalisation. Deradicalisation programmes should avoid a mismatch between the level of root causes and the level of response. It would be a lopsided response if the root cause of radicalisation is at a macro level, but the government response is at a micro or meso level. The response level must correspond with the root cause level for deradicalisation to be effective and sustainable (IPU 2010, Bjorgo 2009, 2005). Without addressing these root causes, such as marginalisation, state repression, ideological grievances, economic exclusion, or identity-based discrimination, deradicalisation efforts risk being superficial. For instance, a programme that

offers vocational training but ignores a participant's experience of ethnic profiling or political alienation may fail to achieve lasting disengagement.

- 3. Country context.** The UNOCT Reference Guide (2018) emphasises the importance of local ownership of deradicalisation programmes; it is essential to develop programmes adapted to each country (Barrella 2015; Hettiarachchi, 2013). The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2006) encourages sharing experiences among member states to address radicalisation challenges. Both IPI (2010) and UNOCT (2018) highlight that there is no standardised deradicalisation approach, emphasising the need for a combination of strategies and shared knowledge to create country-specific deradicalisation frameworks.
- 4. Programme Structure, Profiling & Vetting, Timeframe.** The interlink components of programme structure, profiling, vetting, and timeframe add to the conditions for success of a deradicalisation programme. These components are measures to ensure that deradicalisation programmes are targeted at the right recipients, credible, and sustainable. The identified programme ideology should guide the programme structure and explain how each deradicalisation programme's scope cascade into one another and their timeframes, for example from willingly surrendering to screening, profiling, grouping, psychological evaluation, counselling, and rehabilitation options, with programme monitoring and evaluation throughout the deradicalisation process and until its completion. CREST (2018) and UNOCT (2018) discuss the importance of designing goal-oriented and evidence-based deradicalisation programmes. Finally, at the planning stage of deradicalisation programmes, the mode of evaluation should be clearly defined and stipulated to ensure systematic assessment of outcomes.
- 5. Continuous Training of Facilitators** The success of any deradicalisation initiative depends significantly on the quality, credibility, and capability of its facilitators and programme coordinators. They are the primary point of contact between the programme and its participants, and their role can significantly influence the degree of trust, motivation, and transformation achieved during and after the intervention.

Both facilitators and coordinators must receive ongoing support through training, mental health care, and institutional backing. Given the complexity and sensitivity of working with former extremists, burnout, secondary trauma, or ethical dilemmas can impact staff's judgment and

performance. Therefore, a key part of programme success is not only recruiting the right individuals but also investing in their professional well-being and operational clarity.

3.7 Discussion of Hypotheses

The preceding analysis identified several conditions for successful deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration programmes. However, not all of these conditions can be examined empirically within the scope of this dissertation. Guided by relevance to the Nigerian context and the availability of data, this study focuses on three success conditions that are most frequently highlighted in both practitioner frameworks and theoretical models: (1) individualised programme design and voluntary participation, (2) realistic economic incentives, and (3) community acceptance and reintegration. Each of these conditions is examined through a dedicated hypothesis and connected to a corresponding set of supporting theories.

This study generated the following six hypotheses to answer the central research Question: *“Under what conditions can deradicalisation programmes such as Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) be considered effective in achieving their goals of deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration?”*

H1: Deradicalisation success is more likely when the programme operates in areas with declining insurgent activity.

H2: Participants who perceive the programme as voluntary and tailored to their needs are more likely to complete it.

H3: Participants offered realistic livelihoods and security guarantees are less likely to re-engage with violent groups.

H4: Community acceptance and family support are positively associated with reintegration outcomes.

H5: Trust in state actors, Programme facilitators, and trainers encourage participants to complete deradicalisation programmes.

H6: Deradicalisation goals can be achieved without addressing underlying factors.

However, to allow an in-depth process tracing analysis, based on the level of the academic degree and consideration of word-count limitation, this research will analyse and discuss two hypotheses, while the remaining hypothesis will be reserved as a valid consideration for future studies, particularly at the doctoral research level.

The selected hypotheses holistically address the central question of this study, and were analysed to capture the objective (deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration) of Operation Safe Corridor, and the selected conditions of success.

Hypothesis 1

H1: Participants who perceive the programme as tailored to their needs are more likely to complete it.

This hypothesis focuses on the programme design and completion of deradicalisation programmes. It suggests that participants are more likely to complete the deradicalisation programme if it is designed to meet their needs, and that a relationship exists between deradicalisation programme facilitators, individual participation, and the programme's completion.

This hypothesis acknowledges the importance of programme design, the presence of trained deradicalisation centre facilitators, such as psychologists, clerics, mentors, and third-party partners, including NGOs, who are employed in the programme and have significant credibility for engagement. This hypothesis also links deradicalisation programme completion to the programme's response to individual needs; individual participant needs can be aggregated during the vetting, profiling, and classification for deradicalisation categories.

The supporting theoretical models for this hypothesis include the phase model, which emphasises that individuals occupy different stages along the pathways to radicalisation and deradicalisation. This emphasises the need for an individualised approach. CREST (2018), Bjorgo (2009), and the Pro Integration model – Barrelle (2015)- all emphasise the importance of individual support, with the decision to deradicalise based on risk and benefit assessments.

Hypothesis 2

H2: Community acceptance and family support are positively associated with reintegration outcomes.

Hypothesis two focuses on integration and post-integration concerns of the study. It hypothesises that community acceptance and family support have a positive correlation with reintegration outcomes, which in turn result in deradicalisation outcomes. This study views reintegration as a two-way process; on the one hand, reintegration is necessary for the deradicalisation programme participant, while on the other hand, reintegration is also needed for the affected insurgent community.

Community reconciliation and trust-building measures are needed to prevent stigma and reoffending. The broader community plays a key role in either supporting reintegration or rejecting and stigmatising the individual. Programmes that involve communities early, either through dialogue, reintegration ceremonies, or peacebuilding activities, tend to produce better outcomes. Community stigma and fear, if left unaddressed, can drive individuals back into violent networks. The theoretical model that supports this hypothesis includes, restorative justice model, pro-integration model, push and pull model, (CREST 2018) and UNOCT (2018).

3.8 Conclusion

Chapter three provides the theoretical framework for the dissertation and effectively answers the question “What are the conditions for successful deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration programmes that are identified within existing practitioner approaches and theoretical frameworks?” This chapter addresses the question by analysing the identified practitioner approaches from this study and examining the conditions of success for each approach. It reviews six theoretical perspectives, investigating their respective conditions for success. The chapter concludes by comparing the conditions of success from both practitioner and theoretical perspectives to lay a foundation for Nigeria's case. Root cause analysis is a crucial factor for success, and deradicalisation programmes must be rooted in an ideology and be country-specific.

Chapter Four - Methodology and Research Design

4:1 Introduction

The response to violent extremism and insurgent activities is categorised into two types: a militaristic kinetic response and a non-kinetic soft approach. The discussion on implementing a non-kinetic approach to the insurgent situation in Northeast Nigeria predates President Muhammadu Buhari's administration; but was implemented by the administration. The adoption of a non-kinetic response reflects President Buhari's efforts to fulfil one of his central campaign promises on security within the specified six-month timeline. Yet, six months has passed since the administration's inauguration in May 2015, and a decade has elapsed, with a new administration in place, Boko Haram insurgent activities persist in Northern Nigeria (Ugwueze et al., 2022; Ogunnubi et al., 2024)

Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) is one of the three counter-insurgency and deradicalisation programmes in Northeast Nigeria. The other counter-insurgency programmes are the prison programme and the yellow ribbon programme. The prison programme takes place in Kuje prison in Abuja; a prison-based initiative for insurgent members who are not eligible for OPSC. The yellow ribbon initiative, managed by an independent NGO foundation, focuses on women and children caught in the web of Boko Haram's activities who are at internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in the affected states (Bukarti et al., 2019).

This study aims to study the effectiveness of OPSC by focusing on its aim of deradicalising, rehabilitating and reintegrating ex insurgent members and victims in the community. This chapter focuses on explaining and clarifying the Methodology, research design, data analysis, data collection, theoretical framework, timeframe, and ethical considerations.

4.2 Methodology

This research employs a qualitative method for data collection and analysis based on textual evidence. Qualitative research focuses on collecting, analysing, and interpreting non-numeric data. Its emphasis lies on deriving meaning, interpretations, and conclusions by generating deep insights into the political phenomenon being studied and the subject matter by engaging with the

social environment and involved social actors, such as committees, communities, and organisations involved in the study (Clark et al, 2021; Lamont et al., 2020).

This study is qualitative; document-based evidence and information on OPSC will be analysed based on the researcher's interpretation and conclusion to answer the research question of the study: “Under what conditions can deradicalisation programmes such as Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) be considered effective in achieving their goals of deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration?”

4.3 Research Design and Data Analysis

The study adopts a single-case research design focused on OPSC, Nigeria’s most prominent non-kinetic counter-insurgency programme. This enables an in-depth, context-specific examination of how OPSC operates in practice.

A case is a unit of observable phenomena that can be delimited, which could be observed at a specific time or over an extended period. (Gering 2004, 2007). This study will adopt Gerring's (2007) within-case method, also called “case study”, which entails studying only one or a few cases intensively. Within-case analysis allows for gaining a better understanding of the whole, enabling an analytical narrative and a deeper understanding of the case study with focus on the key components of the case study.

This study uses within-case to evaluate the mechanism through which OPSC aimed to achieve deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration, allowing for an in-depth and exploratory analysis of the case within its larger context (Yin, 2014). Gerring (2007) enables hypothesis generation without testing. This study generates hypotheses and evaluates them exploratively through available literature. The goal is not to establish causal certainty but to identify plausible explanations supported by documentary evidence. (Clark et al., 2021; Lijphart, 1975),

As an inductive qualitative research study, the process tracing method is used to analyse the qualitative data and draw conclusions. With process tracing, the research digs deep to provide answers to the research questions by giving a background understanding of Nigeria’s experience with the insurgent group Boko Haram, the socio-political environment of northeast Nigeria that

allowed Boko Haram to thrive at the onset, how the insurgent group metamorphosed, and the stage at which the Boko Haram insurgent group became violent. This study also investigates whether there has been a change in the ideology of Boko Haram from its inception to the timeframe of the study. Additionally, the study explains the reasons for the shift from a kinetic to a non-kinetic approach by OPSC to contain and curtail insurgent activities in North-east Nigeria.

Process tracing is applied across hypothesised conditions: programme design, incentives for participants, and community acceptance. Process tracing is a form of case study methodology that involves a logical investigation and analysis of evidence for research purposes, tracing causes and outcomes to conclude (Beach, 2016; Collier, 2016). George et al., (2005) posit process tracing is beneficial for both micro and macro analysis, allowing research to draw inferences in the absence of existing comparisons and to generate analysis for the identified case. This is beneficial for this study because OPSC analysis incorporates micro, meso, and macro analyses of factors, and OPSC also serves as an independent within-case analysis. Process tracing emphasis is not solely on the outcome but on the causal mechanism, all the in-betweens, the process, and the inference that serves as a link upon which the outcome occurred (Beach et al., 2019).

This dissertation focuses on Muhammadu Buhari's administration (May 2015 to May 2023), which commissioned and implemented OPSC. The timeframe also corresponds with the methodological framework of this dissertation.

4.4 Data Collection

To investigate the effectiveness of Operation Safe Corridor on ex-insurgent members in Nigeria, process tracing, as a method of data analysis, requires a substantial amount of data and evidence to enable the researcher to draw causal effects and conclusions.

The keywords used to generate the source for this study are: "deradicalisation", "counter terrorism" extremism", "insurgency" ", rehabilitation" integration", "disengagement", "Operation Safe Corridor" and "Boko Haram". The keywords were selected to align with the central research question and hypothesis of the study. They provide relevant framework for literature search and analysis of the study.

Secondary data are generated from academic databases and library catalogue, they include

- UNsearch – University of Nottingham Library
- Web of Science
- Google Scholar
- ProQuest Central
- International Bibliography of Social Sciences (IBSS)
- Academic Journals - Journal of Deradicalisation, Journal of Asian and African Studies
- Third World Quarterly

The search focus for this study was personalised to political science, psychology, criminology, law, social science, sociology, and security studies.

The following sources were treated as primary sources of data.

Defence Headquarters website archive: The Nigerian Defence Headquarters coordinates OPSC. This research accessed data on OPSC activities published on the Defence Headquarters website to analyse the effectiveness of the OPSC programme.

Data from intergovernmental organisations such as the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, International Peace Institute, independent think tank groups such as the International Crisis Group, Centre for Democracy and Development, and Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

State House Press Releases: These are press releases from the Nigerian government, including President Buhari's speeches and government statements on insecurity, Boko Haram, and Operation Safe Corridor.

Media source: Media is a vital primary data source for this dissertation, as the subject matter is of public interest. The two local media newspapers used in this study were selected based on their wide coverage within Nigeria: Punch and The Guardian newspaper. The researcher has open access to the online database of these news media.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

This study did not generate new primary data but rather analysed existing secondary data; there would be no direct interviews or contact with victims of Boko Haram insurgent activities or participants of OPSC.

Ethical considerations are minimal. The ethics application for this research has been approved.

Chapter Five - The Nigerian Context and Operation Safe Corridor: Deradicalisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration

5.1 Introduction

Nigeria, a federal republic in West Africa, is the most populous country in Africa and sixth in the world, with an estimated population of 233 million people (World Bank, 2024). Nigeria shares borders with Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, which make up the Lake Chad basin countries, and together form the regional Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJT) to combat Boko Haram insurgent activities. Benin Republic is the only neighbouring country with Nigeria that is not experiencing Boko Haram insurgent activities, due to its geographical borders to the west of Nigeria. (Ugueze et al., 2022, Routley, 2022)

Nigeria is a diverse country with over 300 ethnic groups and more than 500 local languages spoken. It is a secular state with Christianity predominating in the south, Islam in the north, and traditional African religions practised across the country. Nigeria is the largest exporter of crude oil and one of the continent's largest economies. With a record of 41 peacekeeping missions globally. It is pretty ironic that Nigeria, a formidable military powerhouse with 23 missions in Africa, referred to as the “Giant of Africa,” has yet to defeat Boko Haram. Nigeria has consistently ranked poorly in corruption indicators, ranked 140/180 in the 2024 Corruption Index, and scored 6.64/100 on Political Stability and Absence of Terrorism (Transparency International, 2024; World Wide Governance Indicator; Gift, 2025).

Since independence, Nigeria has experienced both military and civil governments. The Fourth Republic began in 1999 till present. President Muhammadu Buhari was Nigeria’s Military Head of State from 1983 to 1985 and was democratically elected in 2015 after contesting and losing three previous elections. His military background was a key factor in winning Nigerians vote. The 2015 general election took place during a period of heightened Boko Haram activity and amid widespread corruption within the political class. Citizens believed that a president with a military background and ruling experience was well-suited to address the insecurity and corruption afflicting the country. His victory marked a significant political shift in Nigeria’s landscape, representing the first transfer of power to an opposition party - the All Progressives Congress,

defeating the then-ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) government of President Goodluck Jonathan, which was characterised by widespread insecurity and corruption. (Omotuyi, 2022; Ogunnubi et al, 2024)

The call for a non-military approach to counter-insurgency operations against Boko Haram dates back to 2013 during the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan. The Northern political representatives advised President Jonathan to adopt a multifaceted approach to address insurgency and foster peace. The Northern elites opined that the security challenge in the North reflected socio-economic imbalance, poverty, inequality, and unemployment plaguing the north-eastern region of the country. The Presidential Committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution of Security Challenges in the North was established to engage constructively with Boko Haram leaders regarding the amnesty plan. The dialogue initiative failed due to oppositions from the sect leaders. President Jonathan's administration, however, proceeded to establish a framework by creating the Counter Violent Extremism unit under the National Security Adviser's office, named the National Security Corridor, aimed to address youth recruitment and mobilisation into Boko Haram and support defectors from the group through a rehabilitation. This programme did not succeed; instead, insurgency attacks intensified (Ugwueze et al., 2022).

The chapter does not engage with hypotheses, though it contributes to the discussion on programme design by providing background information about Nigeria, the insurgent activities of the Boko Haram sect, the context for the creation of OPSC, analysing its features and programme design to answer the question What are the main features of OPSC as a DRR programme in Nigeria?

5.2 Background to Boko Haram Sect - Insurgency

Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-jihad, which means "People Committed to the propagation of the Prophet's Teaching", popularly known as Boko Haram, which loosely translates to "Western Education is forbidden", initially started as a religious sect, which eventually evolved into a national and regional violent insurgent group. The terror exerted by the group extends to neighbouring countries of Chad, Niger, and Cameroon. The origin of the Boko Haram insurgent group can be traced back to Mallam Lawal's 1996 group, the Shabaab Muslim Youth Organisation.

During Mallam Lawal's educational continuation in Saudi Arabia, leadership of the Shabaab organisation was transferred to Mallam Mohammed Yusuf. This shift also impacted the ideological focus of the group, changing from being a Muslim theological organisation to being open to socio-economic and political (Walker, 2012; BBC, 2016)

By 2002, Boko Haram had transformed from a theological group, with Mohammed Yusuf as its leader, with the primary aim of establishing Sharia governance in Born State, and the whole country, Nigeria. Issues such as bad governance, corruption, and economic inequality can only truly be addressed and solved through adherence to the teachings of the Quran and Prophet Muhammad (Aguwa, 2017; Walker, 2012; BBC, 2016)

The Boko Haram sect viewed the socio-economic and political environment as corrupt. Their earliest grievances against the state and federal government, identified as the root causes of the violent extremist group and push factors of radicalisation, include increasing unemployment among youths, corruption among government officials and institutions, lack of social amenities, and underdevelopment. The sect believed that the democratic system led to the inequitable distribution of resources, resulting in poverty and high youth unemployment, and attributed the unaddressed socioeconomic problems to the corrupt nature of Nigeria's democratic government. The sect also claimed that the Western system of government and education is sinful, as they have contributed to more lack and corrupt practices among the ruling class. Another goal of the sect is to have an Islamic state governed by Sharia law (Aguwa, 2017; Omotuyi, 2022; Onuoha et al., 2020; Ugwueze et al., 2022; BBC, 2016)

Rice (2012), as cited in Ajibola (2015), explained that Boko Haram had an established socio-economic system to support its members, including farming and agricultural support, as well as financial support for members. These are the pull factors that attract individuals to join radical extremist groups. Walker (2012) corroborated that Boko Haram sect provided welfare support to its followers, creating state-like structure that performed functions, such as supporting family life, offering financial handouts, establishing its own security unit, and training youths in subsistence farming to create employment opportunities.

The year 2009 marked a turning point in the sect's interaction and was referenced as the onset of extreme violent attacks from the sect. There was a series of violent clashes between the Nigerian security forces and the Boko haram group, violent government crackdown and arrest of key members which eventually led to the death of Mohammed Yousf. The group regrouped and resurfaced in 2010 with a new leader, Abubakar Shekau, who had a radical extremist ideology, which resulted in multiple organised insurgent attacks in the northeast, northwest, and Abuja, the federal capital territory. This led to the declaration of a state of emergency in the epicentre states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa. In 2015, Boko Haram group pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and metamorphosed to “Islamic State in West Africa Province”. The new identity was short lived as difference in ideology, levels of violence, victims targets, doctrine and leadership style led to the split of the group. One faction reverted to being known as Boko Haram - Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awati wal-Jihad – JAS, while the other became the Islamic State for West Africa Province - ISWAP group. However, after the death of Abubakar Shekau in 2021, both groups reunited and appointed a unanimous head, Ibrahim Al-hashimiyil (Ugwueze et.al 2022).

Some notable Boko Haram Sect attacks are,

- Bauchi prison break led to the escape of prisoners, including Boko Haram sect members, September 2010
- New Year's bombing, January 2012
- National Police Headquarters Abuja, June 2011
- Kidnap of Franco Lamolinara and Chris McManus
- Bombing of the United Nations office in Abuja, August 2011
- Jos Church bombing, February 2012
- St Theresa catholic church Christmas day bombing, December 2011
- Abduction of 276 Chibok school girls, April 2014
- Abduction of 110 Dapchi School girls, 2018
- Over 300 school boys abducted from government science school in Katsina, December 2020
- Multiple suicide bombings in open social places such as schools, churches, and markets

- Kidnappings for recruitment and ransom.
- Coupled with a series of school and church burning attacks, strategic targeted attacks, Newspaper office (This Day) bombing,
- Reports of young female as suicide bombers

(Walker, 2012; Ike et al., 2022; Ugwueze et. al, 2022; Warner et al., 2017)

In 2015, Shekau pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and transformed the group into Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) (Lenshie et al., 2024; Ugwueze et al., 2022; Walker 2012, Crisis Group 2021). Between 2013 and 2015, Boko Haram gained international recognition due to its intensity. The United States of America classified Boko haram as a Terrorist organisation in 2013, in 2014, the United Nations Security Council included Boko Haram on the list of Terrorist Organisations linked with al-Qaeda, and in 2015, the Global terrorist index ranked Boko Ham as the world's deadliest terrorist group. (GTI, 2015; US Department of State n.d)

Between 2009 and 2022, an estimate of over 35,000 death, with over 2.5 million internally displaced due to the Boko Haram insurgency (Ogunnibi, et al., 2024; Ugwueze, 2022).

5.3 Kinetic Response to Boko Haram Insurgent Group

In response to the insurgency that has persisted for over a decade since violent activities began in 2009, the Nigerian government has employed both kinetic and non-kinetic strategies. The various military deployments, with the kinetic approach including; Operation Restore Order, Operation Boyona, Operation Zaman Lafiya, Operation Lafiya Dole, and Operation Last Hold, constitute the primary kinetic response (Owonikoko, 2022).

The Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) was created in 2015, a regional military framework established by the Lake Chad states to combat Boko Haram insurgency and support the affected countries' national military operations, MNJTF consist of armed forces from Nigeria, Chad, Cameroun, and Niger (Onuoha et al., 2020; Ugwueze et al., 2022). In addition to the kinetic response, the Nigerian government has implemented some policies, including the(Onuoha et al., 2020; Ugwueze et al., 2022) National Security Strategy (2019), the Policy Framework and National

Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (2017), the National Counter Terrorism Strategy – NACTEST (2014), and a European Union (EU)-funded prison deradicalization programme, among others. To combat the recruitment and radicalization of extremists and to assist in the rehabilitation and reintegration of Boko Haram defectors, it also created the National Security Corridor (Ugwueze et al., 2022; Bankole, 2023; Hassan, 2022)

5.4 2015 Election

The 2015 general election in Nigeria marked a significant turning point in the country's politics. It represented the first transfer of power from the ruling party to the opposition party. The All Progressive Congress, led by President Muhammadu Buhari's campaign, focused mainly on Security and corruption; these were the major problems the populace believed were plunging the country. Moreover, his leadership experience as a former military head of state was thought would help end insurgent activities in Northern Nigeria, also considering he was a Northerner. Leading up to the election, President Buhari campaigned and promised that the insurgent sect, Boko Haram, would be defeated within six months if he won the election. Following President Buhari's victory and inauguration in May 2015, a committee was formed to investigate and develop a plan to defuse the insurrection. Operation Safe Corridor, the committee's recommendation, was established in September 2015 and began operations in 2016 (AfricaNews, 2018; Ugwueze et.al 2022; Ogunnubi et.al. 2022).

5.5 Operation Safe Corridor

Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) is the State's non-kinetic response to Boko Haram insurgent activities, which remained unquelled despite suppressive force response. The call for peace and a counter-military measure led to the emergence of a non-kinetic approach to suppress the influence and dominance of the Boko Haram sect in North-eastern Nigeria. OPSC, Nigerian Defence Headquarters-led non-kinetic approach of curbing insurgency and fighting terrorism, which is referred to as a humanitarian response towards homegrown insurgency to encourage willing and repentant Boko Haram terrorist to surrender, shun violent extremism, and undergo their reintegration back into society (Defence Headquarters, 2016, 2019, 2020; Hassan, 2022). It

is also a non-coercive approach to ending the insurgency. OPSC aims to foster mass defection of Boko Haram fighters, reduce recruitment into the sect, and serve as a window for exhausted and those seeking a pathway to exit the insurgent group, an exit strategy.

According to General Olonisakin in Defence Headquarters (2020), OPSC is a non-kinetic, multinational, and multi-agency humanitarian operation, regulated in accordance with international human rights and humanitarian laws. The overarching aim of OPSC is to deradicalise, rehabilitate, and re-integrate (Deradicalisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration) low-risk repentant Boko Haram fighters who willingly surrender.

The operation represents the Nigerian government's realisation that the war against insurgency cannot be won solely through a kinetic approach and that different categories of personnel exist in the insurgent group. OPSC can be said to be a “corridor of passage,” to encourage voluntary defection, the laying down of arms by Boko Haram insurgents. Soft handling is also a feature when the insurgents members in a given country are the citizens. In addition to deradicalising the remorseful extremists, the programme sought to reintegrate them into their communities as law-abiding, productive members of society. During rehabilitation, the repentant members would have access to civic programmes and vocational training to empower them to become valuable members of their communities upon reintegration (Routley et al., 2022; Salihu, 2021; Ugwueze et al., 2022).

Due to misunderstandings about OPSC, the government constantly clarifies by stating that OPSC is different from an amnesty programme. Nigeria has had an amnesty programme in the past as a method of resolving the Niger Delta dispute in South-South Nigeria. OPSC, unlike the Niger-Delta amnesty programme, is a comprehensive deradicalisation framework. It is a restricted, custodial programme aimed at repentant, low-risk members of Boko Haram. The OPSC team comprise personnel from selected ministries, departments, special services, and agencies to undertake functions and contribute to the success of the overarching aim of deradicalisation, rehabilitation and reintegration (Bamas et al., 2020).

The OPSC deradicalisation, rehabilitation and reintegration programme was initially planned to take between 16 and 24 weeks. However, in practice, the timeline remains undefined and, in

some cases, the period extends to more than a year, which is one of the criticisms of the programme. (Centre for Democracy and Development 2021; Hassan, 2022; Bamas et al., 2020).

5.6 Deradicalisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Process

Repentant insurgent members are referred to as “Clients” during Operation Safe Corridor’s – Deradicalisation, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration programme (OPSC - DRR), they are not regarded as terrorists or insurgents. Ideally, as defined by the Defence Headquarters, clients are to get into OPSC-DRR by either fleeing from territories under Boko-Haram control or surrendering themselves to the security forces. However, clients are also introduced to OPSC when the military captures Boko Haram insurgents' hideout (Daily Trust, 2020; Ogunnubi, et al., 2022).

Operation safe corridor process commences with the willing surrender of insurgent members to military personnel. After careful literature study, this study group OPSC process into

- a. Arrival, Screening and categorisation
- b. Deradicalisation and rehabilitation stage
- c. Reintegration and Post-integration

The outlined process is now explained below;

a. Arrival, Screening and Vetting

The OPSC process commences at the Giwa Barracks Military Detention Centre. The detention centre is the first point of contact for surrendered ex-insurgent. Documentation and screening are conducted to assess eligibility for the OPSC programme. The Joint Investigation Committee, made up of personnel from intelligence agencies, oversees the screening and profiling of the surrendered insurgents. The essence of the screening is to determine the level of involvement of each client with Boko Haram. This determines the category ex-insurgents would be classified into. The broad categories are low-risk and high-risk ex-insurgent members. Low-risk ex-insurgent members would become the “clients” for rehabilitation who would be transferred to OPSC camp. The high-risk defectors are ex-insurgent members who were actively involved in insurgent activities and are deemed irredeemable to participate in OPSC by the Joint Investigation

Committee. The high-risk individuals remain in the detention centre for possible prosecution and conviction. (Bamas, et al., 2020 Routley, et al., 2022; Ogunnubi, et al., 2022)

This study finds no established, outlined screening guideline for the profiling of OPSC clients. This is one of the criticisms of OPSC discussed in this research. Screening is carried out based on the account given by the ex-insurgent member, and categories are assigned based on the judgment of the Joint Investigation Committee.

b. Deradicalisation and rehabilitation stage

The primary focus of OPSC is on low-risk individuals who hold low ranks within the insurgent group. The low-risk ex-insurgent members - clients are transferred to the OPSC camp at Mallam Sidi for deradicalisation and rehabilitation programmes. (Crisis Group 2021). The focus of the stage is targeted on religious tolerance education, psychosocial support, basic education, psychotherapy, vocational training, drug rehabilitation, counselling, basic health examination.

A series of orientation, rehabilitation, and deradicalisation programmes is outlined. First, psychological evaluation is conducted to assess mental state and determine the extent of violence they have witnessed and how it has affected their mental health. Tolerance of different religions and understanding of diverse religious ideologies in a secular state, such as Nigeria, are taught and emphasised to address extremist religious views and to educate about the secularity of the Nigerian state. Learning vocational skills is mandatory during the rehabilitation programme. This aims to make them self-sufficient upon graduation from OPSC. Farming and fishing are compulsory; however, clients are also offered a range of entrepreneurial skills to choose from. (Tailoring, barbing, cosmetology, carpentry, cap making, and shoe making) (Bankole, 2023; Hassan, 2022; Daily Trust, 2020 Bamas, et al., 2020).

c. Reintegration and Post-integration

This is the final stage of the OPSC process. Clients are cleared for reintegration when they have been assessed as no longer holding extreme radical ideology. To prepare the clients for reintegration into the community and to mark the end of their rehabilitation, clients swear and sign an oath of allegiance to be law-abiding members of their communities, serve as good

ambassadors of OPSC and the country, and take on the responsibility to act as intelligence sources for the military when they suspect insurgent activities or plans in their communities. Additionally, visits from family members are encouraged before reintegration to serve as a transition phase. Community, religious leader and family members are notified prior to reintegration.

Clients' databases are registered, and a National Identity card is issued to enable the government to have the details about individual clients. These national identity cards are given to the clients on their final day at the DRR camp. Clients are reintegrated back to their communities with some change of clothes, sanitary products and #20,000 (Twenty thousand Naira), which is approximately \$60 - \$65 USD, during this study timeframe. (Bankole, 2023; Hassan, 2022; Daily Trust, 2020 Bamas, et al., 2020; Routley, et al., 2022; Ogunnubi, et al., 2022).

5.7 Figures of Graduated Clients: 2015 -2023

Between 2016 and May 2023, covering the timeframe of this research, 2,167 repentant insurgents have graduated from the programme. Among these 2167 clients, 2,140 are Nigerians, and 27 are foreign nationals from Cameroon, Chad, and Niger (Bankole, 2023).

This study finds that there are no official reports about clients withdrawing from the DRR programme before completion, as there is no option to opt out or withdraw.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter examined the origins and activities of the Boko Haram sect to provide a contextual foundation for empirical evaluation of OPSC, answering the question “What are the main features of OPSC as a DRR programme in Nigeria OPSC ? As a non-kinetic method, OPSC serves as a strategy adopted by the Nigerian government to reduce insurgent recruitment and activities, while also functioning as a platform for educating participants about the secular nature of the Nigerian state and promoting religious tolerance. Notably, the appraisal highlighted that OPSC lacks a clearly defined screening criterion, an omission whose implications will be explored in the following chapters.

Chapter Six - Evaluating the Effectiveness of Operation Safe Corridor: A Multi-Stakeholder Analysis of Conditions for Success

6.1 Introduction

Having discussed Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) and its aims in the previous chapter, this study then evaluated OPSC from a multi-stakeholder perspective by analysing reports from international and domestic non-governmental organisations, as well as media analysis on OPSC.

This chapter aims to provide answers to these questions, “How has OPSC been evaluated by government and non-governmental stakeholders in Nigeria and internationally?” and “What empirical conditions characterised the implementation of OPSC in Nigeria, particularly regarding programme design, incentives for former combatants, and community acceptance?”

This chapter assesses the effectiveness of OPSC by analysing evaluations from selected stakeholders. The reports chosen for this review are based on their relevance to the research. The chapter compares OPSC against the success criteria outlined in Chapter 3.6, linking these to OPSC objectives and the hypotheses for a comprehensive assessment. The government evaluation sources include selected government documents and state press reports. The government’s perspective contrasts with those of international NGOs, domestic NGOs, and the media. Only the government claims that OPSC is successful; this highlights the importance of a multi-stakeholder analysis for a balanced evaluation, enabling a comparison of different viewpoints before drawing conclusions.

Furthermore, this chapter narratively evaluates the two hypotheses concerning conditions for success derived from the literature. Hypothesis one focuses on programme design and rehabilitation, while Hypothesis two concentrates on reintegration. The evaluation indicators are linked to the success conditions discussed in Chapter 3.6 and the hypotheses in Chapter 3.7. The indicators identified for each hypothesis are assessed based on success and need for improvement across the hypotheses.

Effectiveness of OPSC is evaluated by;

1. Evaluation of OPSC by Government Sources

2. Evaluation of OPSC by International Non-governmental Institutions
3. Evaluation of OPSC by Domestic Non-governmental NGO
4. Evaluation of OPSC by Media

6.2 Evaluation of OPSC by Government Source.

The government sources used to review OPSC are the Policy Framework and National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (2017) (hereafter referred to as Policy Framework 2018) and the State Press releases that cover the President's speech, presidency spokesperson's speeches and engagements that focus on security.

The Policy Framework 2017 serves as guidelines in preventing and countering violent extremism by assigning roles to all stakeholders involved in preventive action plans. According to President Buhari in the Policy Framework, the government aims to address the root causes and solve violent extremism through a government and people-centric approach, stressing that the strength of the framework lies in its multistakeholder involvement of ministries, agencies, departments, civil Society, religious organisations and communities. According to Major General Babagana Mohammed in Policy Framework (2017), the policy framework aims to support the activities of deradicalisation, rehabilitation, reconstruction, reintegration, and prosecution of offenders, with the focus on making communities safer for victims and hastening recovery from violence. The Policy framework is set to be reviewed every three years from 2017. However, it was never reviewed till the end of Buhari's administration in 2023.

Policy framework (2017) emphasises importance of supporting victims of VE in addressing grievances through justice and action against offenders, including prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration. Further affirms its people-centric approach, with a focus on involving families and communities. The media criticised it as military-centric, citing excessive military oversight, which also affects community acceptance.

On root cause, the Policy Framework (2017) classified radicalisation in North-Eastern Nigeria into push and pull factors. Push Factors include unemployment, poverty, inequality, social exclusion,

health and socio-economic factors. These factors are beyond the control of individuals and can only be addressed and eradicated by the government. Pull factors include grievances towards government, social, economic and religious factors, such as availability of religious leaders who preach distorted interpretations of religious texts. Boko Haram recruits were promised financial benefits, marriage and other economic benefits. Further emphasised poverty, inequality, and exclusion, distorted religious teachings, and harsh economic situations as the main push and pull factors.

Policy Framework (2017) identifies challenges in measuring effectiveness of OPSC to include uncertainty, unspecified timeline, lack of political support, security concerns in communicating success and the complexity of the insurgent environment. It further provided that it could be evaluated on positive community response, decrease in radicalisation, increase in literacy, and the number of ex-insurgent members who complete the OPSC programme.

On screening and profiling, presidential spokesperson Garba (2020) notes that OPSC only admits low-risk members after investigation and graduates them when it has been established that they have been deradicalised. He explained that it is the duty of the community to accept deradicalised individuals to prevent recidivism. This establishes that there is no outlined screening criteria for categorisation and that reintegration responsibility is transferred to community members.

According to President Buhari's democracy day speech (2018, 2019, 2020), he asserted that Boko Haram has been degraded, all captured local governments in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa are recovered, and displaced persons are now returning to their ancestral homes. During an interview with Bloomberg, President Buhari (2022) expressed that Boko Haram forces are now close to extinction due to suppressive military action. Also, government spokesperson Adesina (2023) declared that epic centres now enjoy peace.

Discussion in relation to hypotheses

Using government sources to analyse hypotheses one and two, it is evident that the government believes OPSC is effective in achieving its objectives. However, programme completion and community acceptance would not be sustainable without government addressing underlying root

cause of radicalisation. The view of the government is in contrast to the view of international and domestic NGOs, and the media. Only the government source claimed that OPSC is successful; this highlighted the significance of using a multi-stakeholder analysis for a balanced evaluation.

6.3 Evaluation of OPSC by International Non-governmental Organisations

This section provides an evaluation of OPSC by international non-governmental organisations to facilitate an autonomous assessment of OPSC. It is important to compare perspectives of multiple NGOs to appraise OPSC and government's conclusion that OPSC is achieving its objective and that there is sustained peace in northern Nigeria.

1. International Crisis Group - An Exit from Boko Haram? Assessing Nigeria's Operation Safe Corridor (2021)
2. Tony Blair Institution for Global Change - Dealing with Boko Haram Defectors in the Lake Chad Basin: Lessons from Nigeria (2019)
3. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace - *"Achieving Peace in Northeast Nigeria: The Reintegration Challenge"* (2018)

6.3.1 International Crisis Group – An Exit from Boko Haram? Assessing Nigeria's Operation Safe Corridor (2021)

The International Crisis Group (ICG) (2021) evaluated OPSC by assessing its process, based on interviews with twenty-three former OPSC participants. The ICG report focused on screening, detention centres, investing in reintegration, and raising public awareness and sensitisation regarding reintegration and the OPSC process.

On screening, ICG observed the screening process of the Joint Investigation Committee for lacking clear screening criteria. Explained that while OPSC aimed to create an exit for low-risk ex-insurgent members, it missed its target in the implementation, as a greater proportion of clients are civilian victims residing in Boko Haram-controlled territories, civilians caught in Boko Haram custody (Boko Haram kidnapped victims in captivity) or civilians who independently escape from Boko Haram captivity and surrender themselves to the military. The military then classifies them as low-risk, repentant ex-insurgent members and introduces them to OPSC. Also, male individuals

suspected of supporting Boko Haram ideology, related by association, either friendship or kinship, to an insurgent member, were classified for OPSC. This misidentification undermines the effectiveness of deradicalisation and rehabilitation efforts. OPSC risks missing its intended target group, genuine defectors who pose a security concern and require structured deradicalisation and rehabilitation. ICG (2021) recommends that OPSC develop a screening and vetting process to avoid clogging the OPSC system with civilians caught in the web, who are victims of insurgency.

The ICG report (2021) highlights the uncertainty surrounding the duration of the OPSC programme cycle, from the start to the point of surrender for screening, transfer to OPSC camp, and eventual reintegration, with no definite timeframe for each stage within OPSC. ICG noted that during entry and screening at the detention centre, ex-insurgent members face extreme conditions that violate human rights, further emphasising the forceful conscription into the programme. The report highlighted that detainees can be held for extended periods, up to three years, with no contact with their family members. An interviewee from the ICG report (2021) reported on poor living conditions, inhumane treatment and poor hygiene at the detention centre. With cases of deaths while waiting for decisions at the detention centre. Some participants expressed regret for surrendering, citing the harsh conditions at detention centre (Omotuyi, 2022).

On reintegration, ICG highlights the lack of a clear and structured plan to support graduates' return to society. Ex-insurgent members face stigma, suspicion, and hostility from local communities (Owonikoko, 2022). The populace and community victims interpret OPSC as an amnesty initiative, which creates tensions in communities that are seeking justice for their grievances. For successful reintegration, ICG recommends cooperation with and inclusion of communities and local authorities in planning reintegration and OPSC processes. There should be sensitisation, proper communication, and education of the communities about the benefits of OPSC. This would clear up misinformation and curb hostile treatment of former insurgent members based on the misunderstanding of the non-kinetic approach. The International Crisis Group confirmed a single case of recidivism. Borno State Governor Zulum Babagana expressed concerns about recidivism cases and called for a review of OPSC.

Recommendations of International Crisis Group (ICG) (2021)

1. ICG (2021) recommends the improvement of OPSC screening and vetting process to effectively distinguish between fighters and civilians to avoid overcrowding and OPSC and the derailment of achieving its stated goal by faulty categorisation. A separate rehabilitation and integration programme should be organised for victims to avoid grouping them with OPSC target groups who are low-risk combatants or non-combatants actively linked to Boko Haram.
2. Conditions at detention centres should be improved and the progression from detention centre to OPSC camp should be swift. The processes leading to OPSC camp and reintegration should be managed with a range of clearly specified timelines to enable swift transition of those qualified for OPSC, as delay at detention centre extends the overall timeframe of the OPSC cycle (screening, detention centre, OPSC camp). A specified timeline, ideally a range based on the severity of individual's involvement with the insurgent group, would help ensure a more structured and fair process, aligning with the Staircase to Terrorism Model (Moghaddam, 2005), which calls for individualised deradicalisation based on individual level and roles.
3. Reinforced communication between OPSC officials and community programme graduates should be prioritised. Effective dialogue can ensure timely notices and enhance community awareness about reintegration efforts. Sharing the reintegration plan with community members is essential.
4. Since OPSC clients are incentivised, this should extend to victims in the community to encourage peaceful and holistic reintegration. Additionally, public awareness about the benefits of OPSC to communities and the country should be promoted.

The report can be linked to the Pro Integration Model on the argument that the level of community acceptance of reintegration affects the level of engagement of ex-insurgent members in the community. Integration is a crucial aspect of all deradicalisation and rehabilitation programmes; as such, planning holistic integration programmes would solve the problem of recidivism, as the community must be ready for reintegration. ICG also supports reconciliation, which is the crux of the Restorative Justice Approach.

Discussion in relation to hypotheses

Based on ICG (2021), OPSC has significant potential to achieve its objectives; it does not view OPSC as a failure, instead recommends improvements to achieve its objectives.

On H1, “Participants who perceive the deradicalisation programme as tailored to their needs are more likely to complete it”. ICG critiqued conditions at detention centre, screening process, and programme duration, all of which fall under programme design. ICG reported some cases of death due to poor conditions at detention centre; ICG calls for better conditions at detention centre, citing it would encourage defectors to surrender to OPSC. The joint investigating committee is critiqued for making OPSC fit all groups of victims – anyone who escapes Boko Haram territory or is accused of relating with them, thereby losing focus on low-risk repentant. Effectiveness of the completion as a condition of success goes beyond participants, but the category of participants that completed the programme.

H2: “Community acceptance and family support are positively associated with reintegration outcomes”. Programme graduate faces discrimination from members of the public and distrust from politicians. Governor of Borno Babagana cited in ICG (2021) raised concerns about recidivism among programme graduates. General public opinion in Nigeria does not favour the reintegration of ex-insurgents due to distrust. Programme coordinators of OPSC should devise a more effective reintegration plan by preparing the host communities to accept ex-insurgent members. Those who are not accepted back into their communities should be provided with support till they are stable to avoid recidivism.

Overall, ICG sees OPSC as a veritable tool to mitigate violent insurgency by serving as a passage to deradicalise and reintegrate. It calls on the government and programme coordinators to address the shortcomings in order to achieve sustainable success.

6.3.2 Tony Blair Institution for Global Change – Dealing with Boko Haram Defectors in the Lake Chad Basin: Lessons from Nigeria (2019)

Boko Haram sect operates in the Lake Chad Basin border, which spans Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad. Tony Blair Institution for Global Change (2019) (hereafter “Tony Blair Institute”)

provided a comparative analysis of how these countries managed defectors from the insurgent group. Due to the focus of this dissertation, only Nigeria's case will be examined.

Tony Blair Institute (2019) commended Nigeria for having the most developed deradicalisation programme in the Lake Chad region. The institution acknowledges the multi-agency structure of OPSC and commends the inclusion of psychologists, religious leaders, trauma counsellors, and vocational instructors. The institution analysed that Nigeria's deradicalisation programme focuses on religious ideology, post-conflict trauma and rehabilitation.

Tony Blair Institution (2019) criticised the lack of facilities and capacity to involve female ex-insurgent members in OPSC, as OPSC is male-focused.

Like the International Crisis Group report (2021), Tony Blair Institute highlighted shortcomings in OPSC's reintegration efforts, identifying it as a dominant challenge. The report attributes this to the absence of a clear mandate, as reintegration was not stipulated as part of OPSC's responsibilities. While OPSC prepares ex-combatants for community integration, it is not tasked to implement reintegration within communities. Lack of a designated institution for this role creates a significant gap.

Recommendation of Tony Blair Institution

1. The government should develop an inclusive reintegration plan and appoint a body to oversee its implementation.
2. The process of OPSC should have a defined timeline and proper consultation with communities to carry them along on OPSC process.
3. The institute noted the difficulty in measuring the success of OPSC, due to unclear assessment criteria and recommended establishing a defined programme structure with clear evaluation standards.

The institution not only addressed the reintegration challenge but also explained the underlying cause, which is linked to the lack of assigning the reintegration function to a specific body. Given its focus on reintegration, the report closely aligns with the Pro-Integration Model and the restorative justice approach.

Discussion in relation to hypotheses

Tony Blair Institute (2019) sees Nigeria's deradicalisation framework as the best among the Lake Chad Basin countries and encourages them to learn from Nigeria's approach. This suggests that the institute does not view OPSC as a failure, rather as a framework that requires improvement.

Tony Blair Institute's primary focus is on reintegration; as such, only H2 would be discussed here

H2 "Community acceptance and family support are positively associated with reintegration outcomes"

Tony Blair Institute sees reintegration as the lagging aspect of OPSC, evident in the lack of community support, which is a result of the unaddressed humanitarian crisis created by Boko Haram insurgent activities, resulting in over 2.5 million displaced persons. On the finding that reintegration is not a function of OPSC team, the institution recommends that reintegration function be formally assigned to a designated body to solve this challenge.

6.3.3 Carnegie Endowment for International Peace – "Achieving Peace in Northeast Nigeria: The Reintegration Challenge" (2018)

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2018) (hereafter CEIP) provides a critical review of Nigeria's OPSC process. Firstly, they critiqued the screening process, noting the criteria is unclear, condemns prolonged detention, overcrowding at detention facilities, and lacks screening criteria to categorise programme participants as low risk for the OPSC. CEIP (2018) called for the adoption of defined screening criteria. The report advocates for improved data collection

CEIP (2018) raised concerns about the disconnect between government's approach to rehabilitation and expectations of community victims. While the government advocates an incentivised pull strategy for deradicalisation and rehabilitation, community members prefer a retributive approach towards the ex-insurgent members and incentives for victims, believing they are the actual victims of insurgency and should therefore be rewarded accordingly.

Just as Crisis Group (2021), CEIP (2018) advocate for sustainable reintegration in solving reintegration challenge. Community members seek justice and advocate for a retributive approach, perceiving themselves as the victims of insurgency, resenting governments' deradicalisation and rehabilitation efforts to ex-insurgent members. This perception fuels resentment towards government's deradicalisation and reintegration programme, thereby complicating reintegration efforts.

It further criticises the release of OPSC graduates into IDP camps without a clear aftercare strategy. The report emphasises the need for post-release support and monitoring in reducing recidivism. CEIP (2018) advocates active community involvement in reintegration plans to reduce hostility towards ex-insurgents. It recommends that reintegration should be community-based, with local efforts ensuring deradicalisation and successful reintegration while reducing recidivism.

Carnegie Endowment advocates for an individualised deradicalisation process within OPSC, recognising that rehabilitation programmes should not adopt a generalised approach. It emphasises that individuals are influenced by different push and pull factors, so deradicalisation must be tailored to each person's reasons for radicalisation. For instance, someone who joined Boko Haram for religious knowledge should undergo religious re-education, whereas someone motivated by economic benefits should participate in skills development and other related activities. Likewise, government should address root causes associated with individual radicalisation. OPSC should also address gender biases, considering female bombers have played key roles in Boko Haram's suicide attacks, females should be included in the programme. The inclusion of women in a holistic rehabilitation and reintegration process is essential for peace-building efforts.

Discussion in relation to hypotheses

Although government sources sees OPSC as a success, CEIP views OPSC as being in the right direction to achieve its goal, with the need for improvement in reintegration. CEIP (2018) primarily focused on its shortcomings, highlighting the challenges OPSC faces in achieving effectiveness.

On H1, “Participants who perceive the deradicalisation programme as tailored to their needs are more likely to complete it”. CIEP advocates for an individualised deradicalisation plan after identifying individual deradicalisation and rehabilitation needs. It criticised the screening process as lacking transparency, stating that criteria for screening are unclear and questioned how the joint investigation committee arrived at low-risk, high-risk, detention, and prosecution with no criteria to justify classification. CEIP recommends screening strategy that is context-specific to Nigeria’s deradicalisation climate

On H2, “Community acceptance and family support are positively associated with reintegration outcomes”. CEIP observed that OPSC lacks a structured reintegration framework, community members misunderstood OPSC due to lack of sensitisation, community involvement, and grievance, which resulted in resentment and request for retributive justice. CEIP called for community involvement in every aspect of OPSC as it would increase victims' understanding of the OPSC framework and stop them from seeing it as an amnesty for ex-insurgents. On the other hand, it improves peaceful coexistence and reduces recidivism.

6.4 Evaluation of OPSC by Domestic Non-governmental Organisation - Centre for Democracy and Development. (CDD)

This section analyses reports from the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD): the 2016 Policy Brief - Stakeholders Dialogue report and the 2021 Deradicalisation, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration report.

The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), a Nigerian-based NGO, took a leading role in supporting OPSC since its inception in 2016. CDD has been the primary non-state actor and NGO providing technical and financial support to OPSC. The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) focus on addressing the root cause of radicalisation and presents a policy-based argument centred on community participation.

CDD (2016) stakeholder dialogue with OPSC team identified corruption, poverty, communication gaps between the state and local communities, lack of education, unregulated religious activities, absence of inclusive grassroots leadership, and socio-economic hardships as push factors that

contribute to the rise and persistence of violent extremism, and that also reflect the mistrust and communication gaps (CDD 2021).

From the inception of OPSC, the community requested justice and socio-economic support to rebuild local economic activities. The community seeks the restoration of peace and order and disagrees with the notion that accepting rehabilitated ex-insurgent members would ensure safety within the community. This suggests that, from the onset, the government's non-kinetic response to insurgency through OPSC's deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration is at odds with the justice responses that the community demands and expects from the government.

CDD Recommendations

1. CDD recommends inclusive reintegration, emphasising that sustainable reintegration must involve victims, affected community members, and ex-insurgents. Rehabilitation and reintegration plans should be participatory, providing communities and the public with clear pathways for deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration to ensure that OPSC achieves its objectives.
2. OPSC should address the plight of victims by addressing grievances and mitigate push and pull factors that drive insurgency
3. The government should enhance the justice process to strengthen victims' confidence in OPSC. Stakeholders recognise that accountability and justice are essential to supporting reintegration efforts within affected communities, and they recommend penalties for violent extremists as part of this process.

Discussion in Relation to Hypotheses

CDD accepts OPSC as a crucial framework for addressing violent extremism, achieving peace and normalcy in northeastern Nigeria.

On H1, "Participants who perceive the deradicalisation programme as tailored to their needs are more likely to complete it" CDD (2021) supports deradicalisation programmes that are victim-perpetrator oriented. It calls for involving victims in deradicalisation and rehabilitation

programmes for a balanced outcome. Calls for an all-inclusive deradicalisation programme. Individualised and not generalised.

On H2, “Community acceptance and family support are positively associated with reintegration outcomes” for a successful reintegration. CDD (2021) recommends that OPSC must include all stakeholders in the deradicalisation and reintegration process, address push and pull factors of radicalisation to prevent recidivism. OPSC should not be implemented at the detriment of victims. Finally, reintegration plan should be all-inclusive and involve victims and ex-insurgents.

6.5 Evaluation of Operation Safe Corridor by Local Media in Nigeria – Punch and The Guardian Newspaper

This section evaluates OPSC from the media by analysing reports from two local newspapers: Punch and The Guardian. These newspapers were selected based on their extensive coverage of Boko Haram and OPSC, and also represent views from different political positions. Sources for this section were generated from the news media online database. The research employs key words such as “non-kinetic”, “ operation safe corridor”, “Boko Haram”, “insurgency”, “violent extremism”, and “radicalisation”. Selected editorials and news reports are within the timeframe.

Punch and The Guardian Newspaper

Punch and The Guardian editorials and reports selected are published between 2017 and 2023. This aims to establish a trend of continuous evaluation of the OPSC programme during the case timeframe. Punch editorial (2017) referred OPSC as a programme with a flawed strategy, expressed doubts about OPSC's effectiveness to deradicalise and change the ideology of ex-insurgents, and called for its revision. It argued that OPSC will continue to be a safe haven for insurgent members if it fails to prosecute and address grievances. The Guardian editorial (2023) reported that the government presents insurgent members with two options: surrender to OPSC or face prosecution. Guardian (2023) argued that these options contradict the aim of OPSC, which is to “willingly surrender” to OPSC. The Guardian further argued that surrendering to OPSC under such options is a camouflage for insurgent members seeking protection.

Punch (2017) raised concerns about the absence of a clear screening timeline and delays in detention without trial, warning that this would further strain Nigeria's prison system. He argued that hardliners directly involved in insurgency should face prosecution rather than referral to OPSC, that leniency would undermine community trust in the deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration (DRR) process. Punch (2018) criticised the lack of criteria for distinguishing high- and low-risk insurgents, cautioning against misclassification and the failure to prosecute hardliners with appropriate penalties. Similarly, The Guardian Editorial (2023) urged OPSC to adopt a counter-indoctrination aftercare plan to reduce recidivism, echoing Punch's (2017) call for victim and community inclusion to prevent radicalisation against reintegrated ex-insurgents.

The Guardian editorial (2023) expressed concern about the design and implementation, which do not recognise the needs of victims. State that running OPSC without the government addressing the root cause of violent extremism would lead to futile efforts. This could result in the regrouping to form another insurgent group. This is the current situation in Nigeria, there has been a proliferation and rise of different insurgent groups and activities since the inception of Boko Haram and Operation Safe Corridor. The communities have since experienced banditry, Fulani herdsman crisis, and, currently, a new insurgent group Lakurawa.

From a community perspective, the Guardian editorial maintained that a means of protecting insurgent members has led to the creation of different types of violence in North-Eastern Nigeria, which community members attribute to the effect of OPSC. The Guardian editorial raised concerns about the government's failure to protect the fundamental human rights of victims in the communities at the expense of treating insurgent members with care.

Punch (2020) urged the government to address victims' grievances, stressing that OPSC should not override their demand for justice and that "known terrorist masterminds must be brought to justice." The Guardian editorial (2023) likewise recommended visible justice through the prosecution of hardliners, allowing victims and communities to witness accountability. Both Punch and The Guardian emphasised that the over two million internally displaced persons deserve their grievances addressed, access to reintegration programmes, and recognition of their demand for justice. They conclude that OPSC must be inclusive.

The Guardian (2023) report captured the concerns of prominent politicians, including Senator Ali Ndume, the Former Governor of Kaduna State, and Major General Christopher Musa, who expressed doubts about the integrity, genuineness, and sincerity of the repentant ex-insurgent members. Senator Ali Ndume regards OPSC as the federal government of Nigeria pampering terrorists. Punch (2023) argued that the government should strengthen intelligence operations, investigate sources of funding and weapons for insurgents, and warned that relying solely on OPSC's soft approach without addressing drivers, undermines its effectiveness.

Discussion in Relation to Hypotheses

The media views OPSC as a positive initiative for peace but expresses significant concerns about its implementation, calling for a review. Government must ensure justice, as the current system is flawed and exploited. OPSC needs to be reviewed in order to be successful.

On H1, "Participants who perceive the deradicalisation programme as tailored to their needs are more likely to complete it," the media expressed concern about the calibre of those who complete OPSC. It stated that those who complete OPSC are not the target. The government needs to clearly define and differentiate between low-risk and high-risk individuals and implement this in the deradicalisation programme.

On H2, "Community acceptance and family support are positively associated with reintegration outcomes," the media indicated that OPSC lacks public and political backing. It noted that citizens remain doubtful about the complete ideological shift of ex-insurgent members and fear their reintegration. The media urges the government to address underlying issues to enhance community acceptance.

6.6 Explaining OPSC Outcomes: Hypotheses and Conditions

Building on the evaluation presented above, this section presents a narrative analysis of the hypothesis, linking it to the theoretical and empirical analyses of the study.

6.6.1 Hypothesis 1 – H1 Participants who perceive the deradicalisation programme as tailored to their needs are more likely to complete it

H1 “Participants who perceive the deradicalisation programme as tailored to their needs are more likely to complete it”.

The focus of H1 is on the overall OPSC programme and the tendency of clients to complete it. This hypothesis centres on the cycle of deradicalisation and rehabilitation within OPSC, which acts as a pull factor for clients to participate. The indicators used to measure H1 are derived from the analysis in previous chapters. They include all relevant factors within OPSC that motivated participants to join and complete the programme. Tony Blair Institute (2019) commended Nigeria for having the best deradicalisation programme among the Lake Chad Basin countries.

Among the key conditions for success highlighted in Chapter 3.6 is that deradicalisation programmes must understand the underlying ideology propelling radicalisation and the root causes linked to the identified ideology, which comprise push and pull factors and, Micro, meso, and macro factors. Nigeria’s radicalisation can be traced to both religion and economic ideology. This research contends that the deradicalisation response must be commensurate with the level of radicalisation underlying ideology. For instance, a religious-dominated deradicalisation response, combined with basic economic and vocational skills without addressing root causes, would result in a vicious cycle of continued insurgency and unending deradicalisation. This is the case of Nigeria.

Nigeria’s OPSC addresses religious indoctrination through re-education. Similar to programmes in Sudan and Saudi Arabia, OPSC employs intellectual religious dialogue to correct misconceptions, answer questions, and challenge extremist interpretations of jihad. Rehabilitation programmes also emphasises Nigeria’s secular state and the right to diverse religious expression, preaching religious diversity and tolerance. Bamas et al (2020), Routley et al (2022), and Hassan (2022) reported that clients developed a moderate understanding of Islam, which was suitable for the Nigerian state, while at OPSC camp. This is a tangible success indicator, given Boko Haram’s insurgency is rooted in extreme religious ideology. Now that the reeducation goal is achieved, has the underlying root cause of the Boko Haram religious sect, creating a state-like welfare function

due to economic inequality, poverty, unemployment, corruption of government officials, porous border, armed infiltration, been addressed? The answer is no; the Nigerian government is only constantly addressing superficial micro and meso-level root causes, which are unsustainable. This is reflected in the prolonged fight against radical extremists, employing both kinetic and non-kinetic methods.

According to Bamas et al (2020); Routley et al (2022), and Hassan (2022), the living conditions at OPSC camp served as motivation to deradicalise. OPSC provided better living conditions for clients, which were significantly better compared to the living conditions at their hideout in the forest, when with the insurgent group. After enduring instability, constant movement, and harsh conditions while with the sect, members see OPSC as a more stable and conducive living environment. This research notes that living conditions at detention centres are different from those at OPSC camps. While clients at OPSC enjoy better living conditions, ex-insurgent members who are at the detention centre, that are yet to be cleared for the OPSC camp, do not enjoy such privilege.

This research observed that no clients dropped out of OPSC. Although the programme records a high completion rate, this is because clients are unable to opt out of OPSC, ensuring full participation in all deradicalisation and rehabilitation activities, which indicates success.

This research observed that the participants' needs, met during OPSC, are what the researcher classifies as "superficial needs." These benefits cease upon graduation from OPSC camp. This is not a sustainable solution to counter-violent extremism. Some examples of superficial success indicators of OPSC include the provision of vocational skills, improved living conditions at the camp, and a high completion rate among programme participants. This research argues that participants' needs met during OPSC should evolve from superficial to in-depth needs. In this context, the study contends that the in-depth programme needs which OPSC must address are

1. A conducive living environment is provided only to clients while in the OPSC camp; this benefit does not continue after graduation, nor is it available to victims in IDP camps or individuals in detention centres. This should be addressed to benefit all victims.

2. Skills acquisition is a common characteristic of traditional deradicalisation programme, Ugwueze et al, (2022). Nigeria's deradicalisation programme should extend beyond the acquisition of subsistence skills, such as farming, fishing, and soap making, to address in-depth economic needs. This includes creating sustainable employment pathways to eradicate poverty and unemployment, as well as partnering with businesses or government agencies to secure lawful incomes. To achieve this in-depth skill, it is essential for the government to address the meso and macro root causes of radicalisation linked to these skills, which include addressing poverty, illiteracy, and improving education.

6.6.2 Hypothesis 2 – H2 Community acceptance and family support are positively associated with reintegration outcomes.

H2 focus on reintegration. Reintegration challenge is a significant setback to Nigeria's deradicalisation programme. Community acceptance is crucial for the success of deradicalisation programme. To evaluate H2, the study examines the level of community receptiveness, cases of demoralisation among ex-insurgent members, lack of justice for community members, and lack of confidence in deradicalised members.

According to Barralle (2015), when an ex-insurgent member achieves positive level of engagement, this means the highest level of integration has occurred in all aspects. On community receptiveness to reintegrated ex-insurgent members, Ugweze et al. (2022), Owonikoko (2022), Omotuyi (2022) explain that communities are hostile towards reintegrated members, mainly because of continued insurgent attacks. Owonikoko (2022), Onapajo et al., (2020) reported community reprisal attacks on some reintegrated ex-insurgent members.

On indicators of demoralising of ex-insurgent members, reintegrated ex-insurgent members are constantly stigmatised and name-called in the community, due to unresolved grievances of victims (Owonikoko, 2022; Felbab-brown, 2018). The community members express a lack of trust in the deradicalisation of ex-insurgent members. Omotuyi (2022) also reported cases of ex-insurgent members being avoided by their family members.

This study defines reintegration as the goal of deradicalisation programmes and advised that OPSC reintegration move beyond mere reintegration to inclusive reintegration and community acceptance. Nigeria's OPSC reintegration should go beyond transporting programme graduates back into the communities; reintegration should actively involve community members to improve community acceptance and receptiveness towards ex-insurgent members.

literatures review indicates that the reintegration plan is inadequate. Reintegration should be holistic and inclusive, involving the communities into which ex-insurgent members are to be reintegrated. Community members are also victims of insurgent activities, as such, their grievance should be addressed, they should receive the same prioritisation as ex-insurgent members. The findings suggest more reintegration effort is needed for the success of OPSC. The required effort goes beyond sensitisation and community education on OPSC-reintegration, but addressing grievance, rehabilitating community victims, and addressing root causes for sustainable reintegration.

6.7 Discussion of other relevant conditions

This subsection analyses indicators drawn from the reports of the International and domestic NGO, and the selected news media reports above.

1. Screening Misclassification

The International Crisis Group (ICG) (2021), Carnaige Endowment (2018), Tony Blair Institute (2019), Centre for Democracy and Development (2021), Punch (2017, 2021), and Guardian (2021) all highlighted the importance of vetting and profiling to avoid misclassification and overcrowding OPSC programme. They called for the OPSC to develop, outline, and define criteria that classify insurgent members as either low risk or high risk. Some participants are not insurgent members but victims. Civilians caught in the web of Boko Haram insurgency—hideouts and kidnapped victims—should be rehabilitated separately and not classified as low risk. The low risk category should be reserved for actual insurgent members with the group ideology and low offensive involvement in sect activities. The International Crisis Group (2021) interviewed graduated clients of the OPSC who were kidnapped victims in Boko Haram camps and were screened into the programme. This explains that OPSC misses its target group; ICG (2021) investigated that over

one-third of OPSC graduates are civilians who were escaping Boko Haram captivity or controlled territory. The OPSC programme has become a catch-all for any individual suspected of affiliating with the insurgent group.

According to reviews from the reports above, affected communities and citizens at large do not trust the screening and categorisation process of the Joint Investigation Centre as it lacks identified screening strategy to classify clients.

2. Lack of a Defined Programme Timeline

OPSC lacked a clear programme timeline, although ICG (2021) and Tony Blair Institute (2019) reports indicate that clients enjoy their stay at OPSC camp. Ugwueze et al. (2022) and ICG (2021) highlighted the extreme conditions at the detention centre, and the entire deradicalisation process leading to reintegration. ICG (2021) revealed that ex-insurgent members expressed regret due to the inhumane treatment at Giwa detention centre. ICG reports that prolonged detention discourages other insurgent members from surrendering to OPSC.

To solve this problem, OPSC needs to develop a time frame range for all the stages of the programme based on each client's deradicalisation plan. Additionally, conditions at the detention centres should be improved to encourage defection from OPSC.

3. Lack of Justice

The lack of justice in OPSC results in hostile treatment of ex-insurgent members after reintegration. Community perceives OPSC as a form of amnesty for insurgents. The government needs to incorporate retributive justice with punishments into OPSC; without this, the community believes ex-insurgents might revert to insurgent groups. The community demands justice and prosecution. Communities are also excluded from any part of the OPSC programme process but are expected to accept ex-insurgent members upon reintegration despite their unresolved grievances (Punch 2017, Guardian 2023, ICG 2021, Uguwueze et al; Omotuyi, 2022)

4. The Call for an Inclusive Reintegration Plan and Aftercare plan

ICG 2021, Tony Blair Institute (2019), and Ugwueze et al. (2022) emphasised that OPSC lacks a clear reintegration and aftercare strategy. This is because reintegration is not assigned to a dedicated body like the deradicalisation process. Owonikoko (2022) reported hostile treatment, discrimination, and stigmatisation of ex-insurgents; the absence of effective aftercare and follow-up heightens recidivism risks. Although Nigeria's data lack recidivism figures, Borno's Governor Babagana and Senator Ndume reported cases of recidivism. The solution is to incorporate reintegration and aftercare into OPSC functions, or to establish a dedicated body to manage it in collaboration with OPSC.

Carnegie Endowment (2018) advocates for the inclusion of community members in the OPSC process. According to Ugwueze et al. (2022), excluding community members results in rejection of ex-insurgents, which contributes to recidivism. Community involvement in the process would help address mistrust and misunderstandings of the OPSC process.

5. Lack of political support

Political leaders from Northern Nigeria expressed their distrust in OPSC. Senator Ali Ndume, in Vanguard (2020) and Guardian (2023), stated that insurgent members cannot be fully deradicalised and called for retributive justice, including severe punishment for insurgent activities. Former Governors of Borno, Zulum Babagana, and Yobe, Malam Mai Buni, have called for increased military action to eradicate Boko Haram and maintained that the government's focus should be on affected communities and their members. A number of lawmakers and rights groups rejected the bill to establish the "National Agency for Deradicalisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Repentant Insurgents," emphasising that the government should prioritise addressing victims' grievances. Rehabilitation and reintegration programmes should target victims of insurgency who are in IDP camps.

6.8 Conclusion

This chapter evaluated OPSC from a multi-stakeholders perspective, evaluating government sources, international and domestic NGO and selected media. Hypotheses were also evaluated using case study and process tracing methodology, which do not require quantitative testing.

These hypotheses were assessed through a review of relevant literature and other secondary data (Gerring, 2007). The goal is to identify plausible explanations supported by documentary evidence.

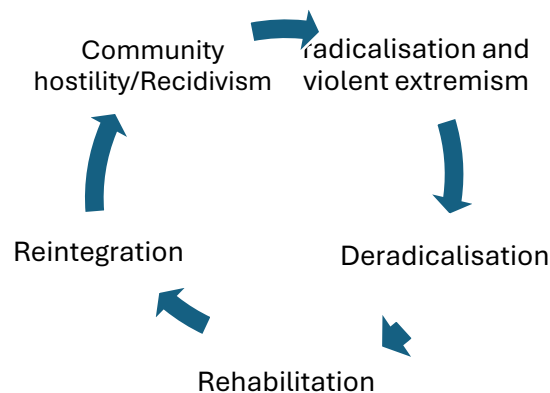
Hypotheses one and two evaluated OPSC's deradicalisation, rehabilitation and reintegration. It acknowledges that OPSC provides religious re-education, subsistence skill acquisition and a conducive environment during rehabilitation, which all positively influenced programme completion. The research contends that Nigeria's OPSC needs to move beyond temporary solutions of providing superficial needs at OPSC camp to addressing the underlying root causes of violent extremism.

Hypothesis two reveals that OPSC lacks community acceptance, and reintegrated clients lack community support. It also explained the importance of community acceptance for sustainable reintegration to prevent recidivism, hostility, distrust and demoralisation of ex-insurgent members. OPSC continues to deradicalise clients into a community where grievances are yet to be addressed, continued insurgent attacks, and high poverty - macro factors that lead to radicalisation. These conditions affect the effectiveness of OPSC. If the reintegration challenges are not addressed, deradicalisation of insurgent members through OPSC would be a vicious circle - a continuous, unending programme.

This chapter concludes by emphasising that a weak link exists between deradicalisation and reintegration plan. This study contends that deradicalisation programmes are client-focused, while less effort is extended to the reintegration plan and victims in the community. This weakness can be traced to the unaddressed underlying root causes.

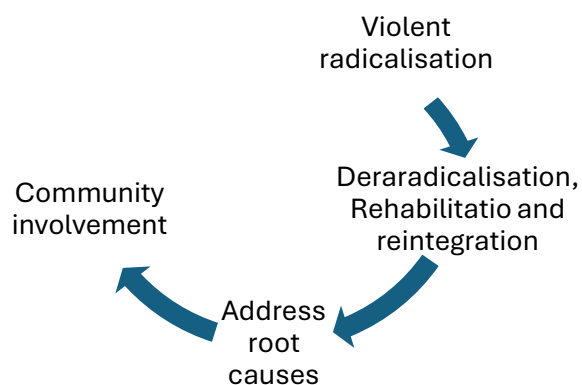
6.8.1 Deradicalisation Vicious Cycle – Table 2

The deradicalisation vicious cycle explains that deradicalisation, rehabilitation and reintegration (DRR) would be a continuous activity if OPSC fails to address underlying root causes of radicalisation. The vicious cycle has been the case in Nigeria since the inception of OPSC in 2015.



6.8.2 Deradicalisation Virtuous Cycle – Table 3

To break away from the vicious cycle, the deradicalisation programme should address micro, meso and macro root causes of radicalisation, involve the community in the DRR process to foster community acceptance, and reintegration should be a two-way approach (for insurgent members and victims in the community). This would result in a virtuous cycle of deradicalisation. In a virtuous cycle, the cycle does not connect back to radicalism. This shows that root causes are addressed and there is no further radicalisation in the community.



Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.1 Summary of Problem, Approach, and Main Findings

The study evaluates the effectiveness of Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) in achieving its deradicalisation, rehabilitation and reintegration aims. These aims are assessed from the perspectives of programme design, incentive influence, and community involvement. Most especially, what aspects of Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) are successful, and which aspects faced challenges and the challenges that inhibited their success?

This study employs a qualitative research-based method with a within-case study focus on OPSC within the context of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration between 2015 and 2023. Using process tracing, the research presents the background and overview of OPSC by discussing the history of Boko Haram, analysing the 2015 election in which President Buhari emerged, highlighting kinetic military operations used to counter insurgent activities by the Nigerian government, and proceeding to discuss Operation Safe Corridor.

The strength of this study lies in extending the review of Nigeria's deradicalisation programme beyond existing literature analysis, moving it from a single theory to multi-practitioner, multi-theory and multistakeholder analysis using international institutions, international and domestic non-governmental organisations and media reviews. This provided a holistic examination of OPSC aims.

The conditions for success, identified across theoretical and empirical perspectives, were used as criteria to evaluate OPSC. The main findings of the study are explained in the paragraphs below.

This study identified the micro, meso and macro underlying causes of radicalisation that result in violent extremism. It also identified push and pull factors of radicalisation and deradicalisation. The study finds that Nigerian government has been concentrating on addressing micro-level root causes and advocates that Nigerian government move beyond micro-level solutions and address the meso and macro-level root causes more critically. This study explains that micro-level solutions such as rehabilitation and skill acquisition are insufficient and unsustainable for tackling the underlying Macro problems.

Saudi Arabia's deradicalisation programme was religious-based, which aligns with the root cause of radicalisation. Nigeria's deradicalisation also focused on religious re-education without addressing the underlying structural meso and macro factors such as poor governance, lack of trust in democratic government, socio-economic inequality, marginalisation, poverty, lack of education, porous border, regional instability, and global jihadist influence that influenced the sustenance of Boko Haram till this moment.

This study finds that the government has not accepted its role in the push factor leading to the radicalisation of youths. Northern Nigeria has the highest population of illiteracy, out-of-school children, poverty and alienation, though this region also makes up the largest voting bloc in the country, which is weaponised for political purposes, and Islam is the dominant religion of the region. The alienation led to the radicalisation for socio-economic equality, losing trust in the ruling government due to the alienation suffered, causing Boko Haram ideology to thrive and gain recruits among the youths in its early years. If the government had provided Meso and macro responses to address violent extremism in its early years, Boko Haram sect's founding father, such as Muhamadu Yusuf, would not have had to create the sect with its state-like functions to influence radicalisation in its early years or call for the Sharia rule due to corrupt institutions and government. The failures of political leaders, corruption, are attributed to Western education, presumed as a sin, "Boko Haram". This study contends that Nigeria Government need to address underlying root causes of violent extremism in Northern Nigeria.

Among the Macro factors that contribute to the thriving of insurgency that the government needs to address include porous land border control, which allows for the easy movement of insurgents and operations along the border of Nigeria and the Lake Chad basin countries, as well as the proliferation of arms and ammunition.

Secondly, this study addressed the profiling and vetting of OPSC clients and emphasised that OPSC lacks an outlined screening criterion, nor an indicator for classification. The Joint Investigation Committee classifies ex-insurgent members based on individual statements. This study calls for an outlined indicator for vetting and classification to be considered during the screening process, which should be based on

- Degree of involvement with the insurgent group
- Level, position and hierarchy in the insurgent group
- The circumstance of the individual recruitment into the insurgent group. Did the individual join the insurgent group voluntarily, coerced or kidnapped?
- What is the individual stand on the ideology of the group
- Opinion on the use/level of violence to gauge the liberal, moderate and radical view of the individual
- Duties/service rendered within the group
- Number of years in the group.

Furthermore, on retributive justice vs restorative justice in a non-kinetic approach, this study observed that due to the severity of the havoc caused by Boko Haram sect, with over 2 million people in internal displaced persons camps across Northern Nigeria, the populace in the affected geopolitical zones constantly calls for retributive justice against the perpetrators of insurgent attacks. This justice is to ensure that someone or a group of Boko Haram members are held responsible for the insurgent actions. Without any evidence of retributive justice, victims feel their grievance is not addressed. As revealed in Punch (2017) and Guardian (2023), victims and community members contend OPSC is a slap on the wrist and government's way to appease insurgent members to accept rehabilitation; compensating offenders at the detriment of the victims. There should be justice for victims, and hardliners should be prosecuted. This would make citizens trust in the justice system that their grievances have been addressed, a sense of justice, and closure for victims.

Reintegration and community acceptance have been a significant challenges to the success of OPSC. Community members are severely affected by insurgent attacks and have accused the government of neglect, with the focus of resources on the perpetrators of these security and socio-economic challenges. This research recommends an all-inclusive OPSC by recommending the two-way reintegration approach, deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration should be a two-way framework ensuring that while deradicalising, rehabilitating, and reintegrating ex-insurgent members, members of the society who are victims of insurgency are also rehabilitated

and prepared to be reintegrated with ex-insurgent members. This would prevent the community from being radicalised against the ex-insurgent.

7.2 Limitation, Policy Implications, and Future Research

The practical implications summarised from this study suggest that the government should take responsibility and move beyond addressing micro factors to include meso and macro factors that contribute to radicalisation. The OPSC screening process should be clearly outlined and documented to ensure transparency; justice and redress should be integrated into the OPSC. Overall, the OPSC should adopt a two-way approach, including deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration plans for clients. Additionally, the OPSC should implement programmes to deradicalise community members against radicalising against ex-insurgents, rehabilitate community members who have suffered losses, and prepare them for reintegration into communal life with ex-insurgents. This approach would address the issue of rejection faced by reintegrated ex-insurgents within the community, fostering peaceful coexistence and encouraging community members to accept and recognise their importance to the OPSC process.

Methodologically, this study employed a multi-theoretical approach to explaining deradicalisation from violent extremism and drawing conditions of success from the six models. Being a single case study, the research evaluated the case study from multistakeholder perspectives. The multi-theoretical analysis provides a credible balance, allowing for diverse perspectives and identifying success conditions from each model, which are then applied to the Nigerian context. Serves as the crux of the originality of this research.

Apart from contributing to academic literature, this study serves as a recommendation for the review of Operation Safe Corridor, a recommendation to implement a two-way DRR approach where victims are recognised as victims.

This study is limited to the qualitative research method of evaluating the Nigerian case of OPSC between 2015 – 2023 timeframe. The findings can be applied to similar instances of violent extremism, but the country and situation context must be considered. Word count limitations also impacted this study. For future research, the researcher plans to compare non-kinetic methods across the Lake Chad Basin region using a mixed-methods approach that combines

qualitative and quantitative methods, generating primary data through field studies and interviews.

7.3 Academic Contribution

This research makes a significant contribution to the study of Nigeria's deradicalisation programme, Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC), and deradicalisation studies in general. It contributes to the academic debate on deradicalisation and rehabilitation by developing conditions of success (COS) for evaluating OPSC generated from multistakeholder analysis.

This study introduces new concepts and explanations in deradicalisation research. Similar to the Push and Pull model and the use of micro, meso, and macro terms in deradicalisation studies, the research develops superficial needs and solutions, as well as effective root cause analysis. Superficial refers to a situation where a deradicalisation programme only addresses less significant root causes. These are mostly root causes originating from individual insurgent members, such as religious indoctrination, while avoiding addressing more serious root causes that are linked to government intervention. This results in ineffective deradicalisation. The study views Nigeria's deradicalisation programme as addressing superficial root causes and superficial push and pull factors. Effective root causes include meso and macro factors, such as economic inequality, poverty, illiteracy, corruption, arms proliferation, and porous borders. All these issues need to be addressed for successful deradicalisation.

This study also developed the deradicalisation vicious and virtuous cycle to explain the effect of an ineffective deradicalisation programme that lacks community acceptance. The deradicalisation vicious cycle occurs when the programme fails to address effective underlying root causes and reintegrate ex-insurgent members into the community without addressing victims' grievances, resulting in a lack of community acceptance. This leads to resistance from community members towards ex-insurgent members, and the presence of unaddressed underlying root causes in the community creates opportunities for recidivism. All this ultimately results in an unending deradicalisation programme, as seen in Nigeria. The deradicalisation virtuous cycle occurs when all underlying factors are addressed and managed.

This study further contributes by recommending a two-way deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration programme for ex-insurgent members and victims. This academic contribution would serve as a basis for further research in the field of deradicalisation studies. It highlights the significance of the study.

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