

**EDUCATION IN THE LIGHT OF DEUT 6: 8: A PANACEA TO CURBING
THE ACTS OF BANDITRY, KIDNAPPING AND TERRORISM IN THE
MIDDLE BELT REGION (NORTH CENTRAL) NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study argues that education is a panacea to the recurrent ethno-religious violence and insecurity in the Middle Belt of North central Nigeria perpetrated under the banner of faith and God. The study argues that some of the perpetrators of this viciousness deliberately distort Scriptures to gratify their selfish interests and in the process manipulate unsuspecting believers to assist them in their narcissistic and cruel interests. To change this retrogressive narrative, the article contends that education is the answer to preventing the perennial violence in the Middle Belt. This demands educating the citizenry of the Middle Belt to eschew every feature that encourages violence and insecurity. Taking Deut 6:8, the paper presents the procedure to adopt in going about educating the people of the Middle Belt. With a close reading of Deut 6:8, the paper asserts that the educating must be given to all human beings, and in every facet and forum of life. The purpose is to engrain in them the measures and modalities for averting drives that lead to violence and insecurity in the Middle Belt.

Key words: Education, Deut 6:8, insecurity, Middle Belt, development

Introduction: Motivation for the study

Michael Kodzo Mensah describes education as the act of transferring knowledge in the form of experiences, ideas, skills, customs and values from one person or another or from one generation to generations. He argues that such transfer of knowledge, which is all-encompassing, economic, socio-cultural, religious, and moral, is intended to ensure that younger generations are equipped with the tools required not simply for survival but for the advancement of society¹. This education can be acquired formally or informally, verbally or nonverbally or in written form. Education gives birth to knowledge and it is the key to remedy and curbing insecurity, globally and locally. This is because insecurity/violence (Heb. חָסָד) is a threat found throughout human history and can be traced to biblical times.² Since independence from the British on 1 October 1960 through the 1980s to date, ethnic and religious violence have become disturbingly

¹ Michael Kodzo Mensah, “Shema as Paradigm (Dt 6:4-9). The Bible, Education and the Quest for Development in Contemporary Ghana”, *Scriptura* 122/1 (2023), 3.

² Eben Scheffler is a Professor from UNISA. In his article “Reflecting on (Non-) violence in the Book of Deuteronomy in (Old Testament) Canonical Context,” he argues that, in recent Pentateuch scholarship, the book of Deuteronomy is allocated a central place. This is not only with regard to the history of the origin of the Pentateuch, but also in constructing the theology of the Pentateuch, even the Tanach, at large. Scheffler, E. 2014. “Reflecting on (Non-) violence in the Book of Deuteronomy in (Old Testament) Canonical Context.” *Old Testament Essays* 22(2), 579-596.

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Tansian University, Umunya more frequent in Nigeria, and their levels have increase day-by-day in the Middle Belt of North central Nigeria.³ In the Middle Belt, violence has been denoted as a common means of resolving conflict in its societies. This is a painful development since violence always leaves a lot of problems in its wake. Therefore, insecurity and violent conflict prevention is an imperative to be pursued in all fronts, because ethnic and religious violence undermine the status of Christian believers as children of God.

One of the most preventative measures of conflicts in the Middle Belt is education. And the Bible has glowing examples of how to go about the education process. This conviction has motivated this study to argue that sufficient or quality education has the potentials to curb insecurity. For insecurity undermines development and as well human dignity in the Middle Belt region. Any activity which undermines human dignity denies the Middle Beltans their inalienable gift from God. The quality of the gift is aptly expressed by Nico Vorster⁴:

Theologically speaking, humankind is God's property. Humans belong to their Creator, for they are his workmanship and are obliged to do his will. Persons do not belong to other persons and therefore have a God-given property in their own person. This entails that persons are entitled to God-given rights that protect their basic properties; it also implies the correlating duty to respect similar properties of other individuals. The human person's most basic property is the right to dignity. Christian ethicists have, at least since the time of Ambrose of Milan, grounded their understanding of human dignity in the biblical concept of the *imago Dei*, a concept which indicates the basic unity of humankind. According to this view, human dignity entails that human beings are entitled to be treated as worthy of respect and concern, because they stand in a special relationship to God.

As observed above, violence against humans undermines the dignity of its victims. The violation of human dignity is sinful because it defies God by alienating the God-given property from its beneficiary. To uphold this dignity, this paper takes the prescription in Deut 6:4-9 to teach the paradigm for pursuing human dignity in the Middle Belt, by suggesting ways of preventing unnecessary reoccurrence of violence in the region. The method to be employed to exegete the text is close reading.

The History and Socio-Cultural Context of the Middle Belt⁵

The Middle Belt Region of North Central Nigeria predominantly consists of the Gbagyi, Birom, Jugun, Idoma, Tiv, Mada, Egon, Hausa and Fulani, Kurama, Amawa, Gure,

³Ayuba, Mavalla, *Conflict Transformation: Churches in the face of structural violence in Northern Nigeria*. (Woodstock Road: Regnum Books International, 2014) and Bulus Audu M, "A Theological Interpretation of Violence (ἰσχυρὸς) in Relation to Joshua, Son of Nun: A Paradigm for a Christian Conflict Prevention in Northern Nigeria" (PhD Dissertation Stellenbosch University, 2020).

⁴Vorster, N, "A Theological Perspective on Human Dignity, Equality and Freedom" in *Verbum et Ecclesia*, (2012) 33(1): 1-6. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/v33i1.719>.

⁵To understand the background of Northern Nigeria, the study briefly talks about Nigeria as a whole. However, the focus is specifically based on Kaduna and Plateau states in which the two are part of the 19 states in Northern Nigeria. It is assumed that the outcome for Kaduna and Plateau states regarding violence could be representative of similar occurrences in Northern Nigeria. This is because Kaduna state is the state of the researcher's origin while Plateau is the researcher's neighbouring state. The researcher understands the violent conditions in Kaduna and Plateau well than in other places due to their proximity.

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Tansian University, Umunya Surubu, Tsam, Ikulu, Atyap, Bajju, Ham, Kaninkom, Koro and many others tribes. In 1900, Nigeria became a British colony. This was a result of the 1885 Treaty of Berlin which granted Northern Nigeria to Britain. Britain already had a Protectorate in Southern Nigeria. Frederick Lugard, who was the British Governor at the time, negotiated with and sometimes coerced the emirates of the North into accepting British rule. In pursuit of this objective, Lugard realised that the best option was to seek the consent of the local rulers through a policy of Indirect Rule. In the Indirect Rule administrative system, the British utilised traditional rulers and their traditional political institutions to govern the people. Laws and policies were formulated and enforced through this Indirect Rule. Traditional rulers only served as intermediaries between the people and the British government. In 1914, Lugard decided to merge the Northern Nigerian Protectorate with Southern Nigeria.⁶

The Middle Belt is a multi-ethnic society that is rich in similar traditions and customs that are both indigenous and modern. These traditions and customs are embedded in a very rich and diverse cultural heritages which are upheld and hallowed, religiously. The cultural heritages are showcased in many festivals which provide entertainment to the people and visitors from many nations all the year round. The indigenous way of dancing, songs, and dressing during their annual cultural days have won pride of place at international festivals.⁷ These cultural heritages equally provide the veritable tools of unity and progress for the various ethnic groups in the region.⁸

The socio-cultural context of the Middle Belt is highlighted in its cultural treasures and artefacts which occupy significant places of honour in galleries throughout the nation and beyond. The Belt is known for different types of arts, which primarily include ivory carving, grass weaving, wood carving, leather and calabash work, pottery, painting, cloth weaving and glass and metal work. The Belt's clothing is unique and attractive. Lace, jacquard, *adire*, and *ankara* are some of the materials used to make dresses in Nigeria. The people wear *agbada (bubbanriga)* caftan and Western attire too.⁹

The common religions in the Middle Belt include Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religions (ATR). The quantity of contemporary Christian-Muslim population ratio is a highly contentious issue. However, there is a widespread belief that Nigeria as a whole is equally divided between Christians and Muslims, although there are many other religious groups which form part of the population.¹⁰ And the

⁶Osuji, Innocent, 2014.

⁷Ayuba, Mavalla, *Conflict Transformation: Churches in the face of structural violence in Northern Nigeria*. (Woodstock Road: Regnum Books International, 2014) and Nguvugher, C. D., *Conflicting Christologies in a Context of Conflicts: Jesus, the Isawa, and Christian-Muslim Relations in Nigeria* (Bukuru, Jos: ACTS, 2010).

⁸Ezekiel, L. G, "A Missiological Critique of the World Council of Churches' Notion of Justice Peace: Its Implication and Contextual Relevance for Overcoming Violence and Peacebuilding in the Multi-Religious Community of Jos, Nigeria" (PhD Dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal South Africa, 2015).

⁹Osuji, Innocent, "The Nigerian Culture and Traditions: Nigeria the Giant of Africa (2014)" Available at: <https://osujinnocent.wordpress.com/nigeria-independent/the-nigerian-culture-and-traditions/> (accessed 28th September 2015).

¹⁰Stefanos, N, *Foundation publication: Religious Intolerance: A threat to Nigeria Unity* (Jos: Stefanos Foundation, 2010).

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Tansian University, Umunya
Middle Belt is no exception to this controversy. The region has an estimated 200 ethnic language groups¹¹ whose citizenry are predominantly farmers.

The Hausa majority in the core Northern Nigeria do not recognize the predominance of Christian population in the region.¹² This dominance is informed by the fact that Christianity has had a great impact in the region through the provision of good education, health, and some social amenities. The refusal of the Hausas to accept Christian dominance has partly been responsible for some of the most heinous attacks of Christians for their faith and their growing population.¹³

Until recently, its people were generally hospitable and accommodating; and so, they coexisted peacefully with each other as Nigerians. The region's contemporary history has reduced it into a hot bed of violent circumstances and epitomic life threatening happenings in Northern Nigeria. This unfortunate developed has deprived the region its appellate as a place where unity is realised in the midst of diversity. While there are many reasons for insecurity in the Middle Belt region, in most cases, they are reduced to either religion or ethnic conflicts because these are the most convenient reasons which can generate support. These infantile reasons gain support because of improper education. It is the argument of this paper that if the citizenry of the Middle Belt is properly educated, religion and ethnicity will not be reasons for violence in the region. Aside religion and conflicts, this paper discusses below some other areas of which the people of the Belt need to be educated about in order to forestall the reoccurrence of violence in the region.

Exegesis of Deut 6:8.

Deut 6:8 is collocated in Deut 6:4-9 which has been described by Elisha Kwabena Marfo as a self-contained unit marked by "Hear O Israel" in v. 4 and a paragraph marker called a *setuma* in v. 9¹⁴. It is not easy to determine the literary form or genre of the text¹⁵. But the content of Deut 6:4-9 is technically called the *Shema*. It has been described as the foundation of the Jewish faith, and is an exhortation to Israel to acknowledge God as her own. Deut 6:4-9 is so foundational that it is recited by observant Jews as a morning and evening prayer.

Since we are applying a close reading of this text, this paper shall not concentrate on the reactional history of the text nor shall we concentrate on the syntax of the text. Our concern is the pedagogical importance of the passage, because the pericope outlines the foundational elements of instruction, those to be instructed and even the time of instruction. Michael Mensah observes that the nature of the instruction the text

¹¹Gat, A., and Jakobson, A, *Nations: The Long History and Deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

¹²Matthew Kukah H, *Democracy and civil society in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd, 1999) and Daniel, Nicodemus. P, "Preaching reconciliation: A study of the narratives in Genesis 37-50." PhD Dissertation. Stellenbosch University, 2017).

¹³Kadala, E, *Turn the other Cheek: A Christian dilemma* (Bukuru: African Christian Textbooks (ACTS), 2009) and Ezekiel, L. G, 2015).

¹⁴ Elisha Kwabena Marfo, "An Exegetical Study of Deuteronomy 6:4 and Its Educational/Missiological Implication in Africa", *Journal of ALLAS African Theological Associations* 6 (2-17), 79-80.

¹⁵ BRUCE E. WILLOUGHBY, "A Heartfelt Love: An Exegesis of Deuteronomy 6:4-19", *Restoration Quarterly* 20 (1977) 73-87. 75

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Tansian University, Umunya prescribes is however not a matter of absolute consensus¹⁶. This is true because the text may imply a mechanistic rote method of education of simple repetition. This is not the concern of this paper. It showcases the process of education.

Deut 6:4-9 is divided into two parts: 6:4-5 and 6:6-9. Verses 4-5 introduces the so-called *Urdeuteronomium* in Deuteronomy 12-26 and it concludes in Deuteronomy 28 with the first blessings and curses. These verses are also understood as a declaration of faith, with verse 7 as an injunction to educate the children through the monotheistic creed, and verses 8-9 as the injunction to memorise the words through the use of phylacteries and door inscriptions. The difficulty, admittedly, is where to place verse 6. However, our concern in this paper is verses 7-9 which talks about the manner of instruction of the *Shema*.

The method of instruction of the *Shema* is based on the principle of diligence, regularity and pragmatism. From this passage, we derived three dimensions of education. The first is in verse 7a with the verb *šinnēn* which means “to repeat, sharpen”. The emphasis is to be laid on repetition. The mode of instruction is underscored by the *piel* verb *dibbēr* in verse 7b. *Dibbēr* highlights giving constant and repetitive instructive through spoken words. What comes across in verse 7 according to Michael Mensah is a cognitive or intellectual dimension of education, aimed at equipping the child with the knowledge of God’s law¹⁷. However, the point being equipping the child with knowledge by repeatedly and constantly speaking about it. Combined with verse 9, verse 8 drives at involving the sense and the holistic aspect of man in the education: physical development, intellectual growth, spiritual maturity and social interaction. Elisha Kwabena Marfo contends that when these areas are not fully developed, then education has not achieved its right goal and purpose on the individual¹⁸.

From the foregoing, the education measures adopted to prevent violence conflicts in order to avoid debasing human dignity in the Middle Belt must be constant and repetitive. It must be spoken of in every forum and at every given opportunity. The medium of this constant education must be positively employed. It should exist to ensure that it serves to promote the features which encourage peaceful coexistence. It should not be the avenue for the wrong dissemination of information. The areas where this is to be happen is what we shall concern ourselves with below.

Education/the media

Education is vital because the situation in the Middle Belt is so volatile that violence can sometimes be ignited even by what is not necessarily part of the region. Educating communities and the society about happenings around them through the Media is one of the factors that unintentionally reduce or contributes to some of the insecurities experienced in the Middle Belt region. By reporting things that are happening in the world the media is providing a good service to the world. However, some of the reports bear unintended consequences. This happens when the media repeatedly underscores an insignificant issue. Tensions that take place in other parts of the world when reported

¹⁶ Michael Kodzo Mensah, “*Shema* as Paradigm (Dt 6:4-9), 4.

¹⁷ Michael Kodzo Mensah, “*Shema* as Paradigm (Dt 6:4-9), 7-8

¹⁸ Elisha Kwabena Marfo, “An Exegetical Study of Deuteronomy 6:4”, 82-83.

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Tansian University, Umunya in Nigeria lead to conflict among inhabitants of the Middle Belt region. For example, conflicts between Muslims and European people or American people can provoke tensions and even open conflict between Muslims and Christians in the Middle Belt. Unfortunately, sometimes people in Nigeria will identify with conflicting groups overseas and associate local people with the enemies of the group they identify with overseas. Such knowledge comes through media and that makes media to be identified as one of the factors that can ignite conflict in Nigeria. Sometimes, an incident that took place and is reported by the media in the Middle Belt may confirm stereotypes that one group holds about the other group and sometimes leading to tensions.¹⁹

If Christians and Muslims are engaged in a conflict somewhere in the world, through media such news reaches the Middle Belt as well. When such news reaches the region, it is not impossible that such news can trigger “revenge” attacks on the locals on something they are not part of or even do not know about. For example, the issue of Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* became an issue of contention in Nigeria. In Kaduna, the researcher’s home city, there were marches by Muslims to hand over a letter of protest to the British Consul.

Despite the fact that Deut 6:8 calls for educating people at all times and in all facets, educating citizens wrongly about happenings around them through the media is not part of the goals of this pericope. To incorrectly educate people is another factor that causes or fuels religious, political, economic and ethnic conflict in Northern Nigeria. Through the media, people tend to perceive conflict in one place as part of a conflict in another, causing enmities in one part of the country to spill over into other regions. An act of violence in one place is used to confirm the stereotype of the enemy in another place, or even to provoke revenge or reprisals attacks elsewhere in the world. Against this backdrop, therefore, any offensive incident perpetrated against Islam (for an example by any Western country) leads to a backlash on Christians in the Middle Belt. So also, offensive incidents perpetrated against political parties and ethnic groups often leads to clashes. Triggers of some of these conflicts are neither from the Middle Belt nor from other parts of Nigeria, but outside the country.

A clear example of this ugly phenomenon of destructive education through the media is the Danish cartoons which triggered off much destructions in many states in Nigeria.²⁰ What have Danish cartoons created by a journalist sitting in the comfort of his office in Denmark to do with a poor man/woman thousands of miles away in hot Kaduna, Kano or Maiduguri? The media was wrongly utilized to exacerbate conflicts by giving a biased account. This could also be seen in the February 2000 *Sharia* riot and the November 2008 conflict in Kaduna and Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Voice of America (VOA) Hausa service were media houses that gave accounts that fuelled the conflict.²¹ Media should learn to educate people properly according to the spirit of Deut 6:8.

Again, however, the media remains one of the important institutions in public governance. The public expects the media to provide information and create platforms for open conversation or dialogue on issues affecting the people. One of these issues

¹⁹Kadala, E, (2009).

²⁰ Ibid, 2009:78.

²¹ Ibid.

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Tansian University, Umunya includes conflict prevention, mitigation and transformation, while in some cases, the media transmission of fake news have escalated violent conflicts. The media are both a friend and a foe to a peace process. The media can foster human security if genuine news is aired but there is also evidence that the media can reinforce motives for fuelling wars especially when news transmitted are insightful and inflammatory. They can be instruments for peace and conflict management, which promotes messages and strategies that can lead to peaceful agreements and tolerant behaviour in a given society if their news is not biased, offensive or provocative. However, the media can also be a weapon of violence, propagating biased information and manipulating societies or groups in conflict with divisive ideologies and harmful actions.²²

From the foregoing, the need for religious and secular education to everyone irrespective of age or class is the drive Deut 6:8. To follow this text's expectations is to proffer panacea to insecurity in the Middle Belt region. Deut 6:8 requires that respect for parent, leaders and everyone in a reciprocal manner would help avert channels of insecurity. Consequently, Deut 6:8 calls for constructive drive to effective education and communication through the media on rules and regulations that unite on matters of religion and ethics needs to be pursued. Educating citizens through the media to provide and create platforms that will result to conflict prevention and transformation is *sine qua non*.

Political affiliation

In the Middle Belt, ethnicity is a social phenomenon that is manifested in interactions among individuals of different ethnic groups. This is within a political system where language and culture are the most prominent attributes. According to Çancı and Odukoya,²³ “[t]he formation of dialects within languages was one of the ways in which ethnicity – both small-scale and large-scale – became fixed in Nigeria.” Historical events like the Jihad (Holy War) of Usman Dan Fadio, and colonialization have led to the growth and spread of the Hausa/Fulani hegemony in Northern Nigeria. This is why the Hausa/Fulani would always want to rule the country like in the period of President Muhammadu Buhari, a Hausa/Fulani from the northern part. The event made this group a very strong force, which has manipulated political and economic power in the north to its advantage.

The Jihad has subjugated independent communities and tribes under the emirates created by it. While on the other hand, colonialism has cobbled together independent communities that had successfully resisted the Jihad under the leadership of the emirs for easy maintenance of indirect rule. Consequently, ethnic conflicts have arisen as efforts by subjugated communities to free themselves from the age long domination by the Hausa/Fulani. A typical example of this age long struggle is the Zangon Kataf conflict of Kaduna State in May 2002. According to Mavalla (2014:114), since colonialism, the Kataf people have been subjugated under the emir of Zaria, and the emir chose their local rulers or district heads. The Kataf people accused the emir of Zaria of favouring the Hausa settlers in cases of land disputes and also accused him of treating them as slaves in their motherland (Mavalla, 2014:114-116).

²²Ezekiel, L. G, 2015:91-92).

²³Çancı, H and Odukoya, O.A. “Ethnic and religious crises in Nigeria: A specific analysis upon identities” (1999–2013). *The European journal of social science research*, 23 (3), (2013) 87-110.

Similar cases of minorities trying to gain political freedom from pre-colonial and colonial subjugation exists in the north. For example, is the Tafawa Balewa religious cum ethnic conflicts of Bauchi state, which have persisted for a long time. Kadala (2009:105) points out that the underlying factor of violence in Bauchi state is the Hausa/Fulani attempting to totally subject the Seyawa people of Bauchi State to the scope of their feudal exploitative system. Today, Christians in Northern Nigeria are becoming economically dynamic and powerful. Due to settlers from the south and east, in the north, there has been an increase of indigenous Christians who are up and rising to break the Muslim monopoly of the economy. For example, the dry season farming sector is an area where the Hausa/Fulani were in control before, but today indigenes are firmly in control and are doing well (Kadala, 2009:105).

From the foregoing discussion, it has become clear that the hegemony hitherto enjoyed by the Hausa/Fulani of Northern Nigeria has dwindled (Mavalla, 2014:114-116; Afanifowose, 1982:1). The few educated elites among the Hausa/Fulani are afraid because of the precarious position in which they live. The last resort for the Hausa/Fulani is violence.²⁴ This underscores the Hausa adage which says “*tabarmar kunya, da hauka ake nade ta*” which simply means, “the shamed will resort to anything to cover his shame”. Since the culture of the Middle Belt region reveres honour and shame,²⁵ no one will like to be shamed as such violence has become the last resort to Hausa/Fulani group. Therefore, the fact remains that the spates of insecurity we see within the Middle Belt today are means through which the Hausa/Fulani are trying to get their grip back on their lost glory.

Deut 6:8 calls for a persistent education on the right political attitude and dispensation that builds and enables growth. The following are the major political conditions that have led to violent reactions and confrontation in Kaduna, Jos and beyond in the Middle Belt. This has led to scores of deaths and massive destruction of lives and property. If there are particulars of the education Deut 6:8 calls for, find them below:

i) The political condition of the imposition of candidates to contest certain political electoral positions by the government and political parties. For example, the ruling party against the popular will of the people, contributed greatly to instigating violence in the area and beyond (Ezekiel, 2015:84). This is most pertinent in Southern Kaduna where political contestation has been high as religious and ethnic affiliations have been used in fuelling the process. The ruling political party has been accused of complicity

²⁴ Individual and groups throughout history, have, in one form or another, resorted to violence or its potential use as a tactic of political action. Violence has been used by groups seeking power, by groups holding power, and by the groups in the process of losing power for many decades ago in Nigeria. Also, violence has been pursued in the defence of order by the privileged, in the name of justice by the oppressed, and in the fear of displacement by the threatened (Anifowose, 1982:1).

²⁵The concept honour and shame is a compound word that refers to social evaluations of behaviour and the partial loss of dignity or respect in the presence of others by an individual (Bulus, 2017:193). Desilva (2008: 287) elucidate that, “honour refers to the experience of being esteemed by one’s group or other social entities on the basis of embodying that which is deemed desirable, virtuous and socially productive. Shame refers, generally, to the opposite experience of being devalued and belittle on the basis of failing to measure up to transgressing the same.” Invariably, the concept honour goes beyond wealth, while shame provokes a feeling of low esteem on the wrong doer, regardless of the person’s objective status. In honour and shame cultures, mostly in Africa and parts of Asia, people would go to the extent of killing others as a way of revenging the death of their fellow brother just to regain their dignity or the dignity of their ethnic, political or religious group.

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Tansian University, Umunya
in the imposition and non-adherence to the principles of internal democracy within the
party structure and governance framework (Ezekiel, 2015:84).

ii) Again, some government policies suggest exclusion of some groups from active involvement in governance. To further worsen the situation, government infrastructural projects are hardly, not sited or undertaken in some areas that are considered either as strongholds of the opposition or presumed clusters for the non-natives. Such government policies include guidelines for accessing educational scholarships awarded by the State government and other educational and health incentives (Ostien, 2009: 13; 29 and Ezekiel, 2015:84).

iii) Other reasons that causes religious and ethnic violence include tension that are likely to end in violent insurrection. These comprises of certain statements and actions of political leaders that are gratifying and/or tolerant to religious sentiment. It is a common phenomenon that some government officials and prominent political actors who prey on religion are often religionist politics. Such actions make the political space non-neutral and unsafe for those considered to not belong to the so-called religious majority.

Religion and ethnicity are used not only as a cloak for trying to gain political power but also as a means for trying to gain economic wealth. This is because some politician and individual has and are enjoying the recurrent violent activities (insecurity) in the Middle Belt region and will not want it to end. In essence, the study is making a case that people use religion to “justify” violence or “motivate” violence even though their real motivations are not religious but political and/or economic.

Economic factors

The quest for economic gain is often a cover for perpetrating violence in the Middle Belt. As such, economic policies and resource distribution play a significant role in the life of any society. In this regard, any imbalance or deprivation in economic projection and distribution may adversely undermine the well-being of the society, leading to civil strife and citizens’ dysfunction. Some of the noticeable economic factors and forces that have led to the disruption of peace and peaceful coexistence in Kaduna, Jos and by extension Northern Nigeria include the following:

i) The growing population of unemployed and unemployable youths has contributed to the insurrections experienced in Kaduna, Jos and beyond. The jobless youths are easy prey to be used by conflict mongers to foment and cause trouble that often leads to senseless destruction of lives and property. Similarly, the collapse and destruction of some business facilities and premises (shopping malls and main market spaces) which hitherto have served as major enterprises and sources of economic empowerment for many individuals created unrest and despondency, thereby aggravating the worsening condition of the populace.²⁶Such situations have undoubtedly contributed immensely

²⁶ Economically, one can say that the recurrent violence in Northern Nigeria has caused the region to become backward and underdeveloped. Unemployment has become rampant due to the closure of many factories/industries as a result of violence. Livelihood has become very difficult since a lot of people have lost their properties or jobs. As of today, the rate of poverty is higher in the northern part than in the southern part of the country. In his view, Chiroma (2014:86) submit that “[m]any resources that were meant for development projects have been diverted to relief services and the deployment of security personnel.”

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Tansian University, Umunya
to the insecurity experienced in the Middle Belt region and most especially Kaduna,
Jos and their environs.

ii) The unequal access to resources and limited job opportunities is another economic factor of the recurrent violence in Northern Nigeria. It is strongly argued by Samuel Kunhiyop (2010:110) that: “economic tension also rises when new resources, hitherto unallocated, are to be distributed, and when the new patterns of distribution create alterations in the existing ranking of individuals.” The lack of job opportunities has no doubt played an active role on the violent conflicts experienced. This is not a case of gaining employment but a situation of having a job that can give the huge population of jobless youths some means of income and sustenance. After completing their studies in both primary, secondary and tertiary institutions, a lot of youths roam the streets due unemployment. With this situation the youths are easily dragged into violence of any kind either ethnic, religious or political. Therefore, job creation is by and large a panacea to the current insecurity militating against the flourishing of the region.

iii) One other economic factor to the recurrent insecurity in the Middle Belt is that when Kaduna and Plateau State governments banned the use of motorcycles for commercial purposes (popularly known as *okada*). The action of the government aggrieved the youths and resulted in violent protest in Kaduna and other parts of Northern Nigeria. The use of motorcycles (motorbikes) for commercial purposes has been a common means of income for a number of households in the region. It got worse when proper arrangements for alternatives were not made by government to cushion the anticipated negative impact of the ban. This thereby forced the youth to resort to violence, protesting the actions of government and insensitivity to their plights (Krause, 2011:26).

The quality of education that is needed to teach the youth and the larger society how to generate wealth must be constant and regular as Deut 6:8 prescribes. This is imperative because it is indisputable that poverty or economic disorder has profound effects on the peace of any human society (Ezekiel, 2015: 87). Poverty and economic dislocation have contributed heavily to the violent conflicts experienced in Kaduna, Jos and beyond. Poverty dehumanizes and also takes away the dignity of the human person. Worse of all, it makes the human person susceptible to commit crime and be turned into a tool for violence. Job creation as well as legitimate acquisition of wealth is helpful for peace building in the Middle Belt region.

Conclusion

The growth and development of any nation or regions within it cannot be attained with an adequate pattern, structure and system of education. Where the citizenry lack education they become open to preventable violence.

This article taking the forceful call for education through teaching in Deut 6:8 calls for the need for a constant effort at educating the citizenry of the Middle Belt in fronts. The article contents that it will help curb the recurrent insecurities through banditry and kidnapping within the Middle Belt of North Central Nigeria. The paper asserts that where there is adequate security, there will be political and socio-economic development within the region. This study submits that the recurrent insecurity in this region has caused it preventable backwardness and underdevelopment, because the region is faced with an army of the unemployed, difficult livelihood and bleak future.

However, a new Middle Belt is possible if education is considered as a remedy. Education should be measured as a blessing not a cause to the under development of the region for the flourishing of every sons and daughters of the soil.

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