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SOCIAL DOMINANCE ORIENTATION AS A PREDICTOR OF INCLINATION TO TERRORISM AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated social dominance orientation as a predictor of inclination to terrorism among young adults. Cross sectional design was used. A total of one hundred and sixty one (161) undergraduates (66 males and 95 females) served as participants in the study. Social dominance orientation scale and inclination to terrorism scale were used in the study. The hypothesis that social dominance orientation will significantly predict inclination to terrorism among young adults was tested using regression statistics. The results showed that social dominance orientation is a significant predictor of inclination to terrorism ($\Delta R^2 = .145$, $\Delta F = 13.26$, $p < .001$). This implies that increase in social dominance orientation correlates with increase in inclination to terrorism among young adults.

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INTRODUCTION

Over a decade now, terrorism has become a recurring phenomenon in our society. An average citizen in our society is more security conscious now than ever because of this phenomenon called terrorism. The Nigeria society has been experiencing dramatic changes in every facets of life as a result of terrorism and these changes have also brought some stressful situations to which individual are finding it difficult to cope with. Poland (2002) from his own perspective defined terrorism as the premeditated deliberate systematic murder, mayhem, and threatening of the innocent to create fear and intimidation in order to gain a political or tactical advantage, usually to influences an audience. Rodin (2004) in his own view says that terrorism is the deliberate negligent or reckless use of force against noncombatants, by state or non state actors for ideological ends and in the absence of a substantively just legal process. According to Schmid and Jongman (1988) terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by semi clandestine individual, group, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons, whereby-in contrast to assassination-the direct victims of violence are not the main target. However, there are two common elements usually found in definitions of terrorism:

- 1) That terrorism involves aggression against non combatants.
- 2) That terrorist action in itself is not expected by its perpetrator to accomplish a political goal but to influence a target audience and change that audience's behaviour in a way that will serve the interest of the terrorist. (Badey 1998: Laquer 1999.)

The immediate human victims of terrorism are generally chosen randomly or selectively from a target population, and serve as message generators, threat and violence-based communication processes between terrorist victims, and many targets are used to manipulate the main target, turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether propaganda, coercion, or intimidation is primarily sought. Terrorism is as old as human's willingness to use violence to effect change in the society. According to Post (2006) among the people who embark on terrorism exist multiplicity of individual motivation. For some, it is to give a sense of power to the powerless. For others, revenge is a primary motivation; for still others, it is to gain a sense of significance. According to Feldman (2009) environmental degradation, poor governance, tribalism, saturation of continent with weapons etc. are the causes of terrorism.

The effects of terrorism in a society include lost of lives and properties, sense of insecurity, fear of migration, fear of investment etc. Terrorists are violent, intolerant, rigid, harsh, aggressive and suicidal in nature. They believe in their leader, and that their group is the best. They also believe that whatever ideology their group is built on is the best. This same traits can also be found in people who are high on social dominance orientation, who believe that their group is superior to other groups and that group based hierarchy should be

maintained between their group and out groups through all possible means even if it includes the use of violence in an intergroup context (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth & Malle, 1994).

Social dominance orientation (SDO) is defined as a general preference for hierarchical relations between groups and a desire for superiority of one's own group (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). It is the degree to which an individual want his or her group to dominate other groups and to be superior to them. Social dominance orientation is a personality trait which predicts social and political attitudes, and is a widely used social psychological scale. Social dominance orientation is conceptualized as a measure of individual differences in levels of group-based discrimination. That is, it is a measure of an individual preference for hierarchy within any social system and the domination of lower-status group. Sidanius and Pratto (2001) were the first to propose social dominance orientation as part of their social dominance theory. Social dominance orientation manifests itself in different aspect of our society. For example, in employment, remuneration, holding political position, holding a managerial position, giving or receiving health services, etc., the difference in its manifestation is that it manifest either in the hierarchy enhancing direction or hierarchy attenuating direction.

Terrorism is mostly carried out by a group and this group has a leader which every other member believes in and takes order from. Terrorists possess this trait of absolute obedience or submission to the authority or leader and to the norms guiding the group which is also found in people who are high in authoritarianism. Terrorism has brought about a high level of uncertainty in our society. There is chaos everywhere, lives and properties are being destroyed and people live in fear not knowing what will become of them the next minute. Above all, the act of terrorism is on the increase and takes more sophisticated dimension like suicidal bombing, car bombing, kidnapping etc. as the days go by. Bearing this in mind, the researcher intends to investigate if social dominance orientation will significantly predict inclination to terrorism among young adults?

Theoretical Background

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) holds a number of important implications for the study of terrorism. The elements of social identity such as identification with members of one's group and derogation of group are learned through a variety of direct interpersonal interactions. Tajfel and Turner (1979) propose that there are three mental process involved in evaluating others as "us" and "them". This takes place in a particular order such as social categorization – social identification – social comparison.

These social identity dynamics form an important topic of conversation within the family and peer group and they may be incorporated into religious prayers, sermons, and religiously sponsored activities. In addition, “us” versus “them” distinctions may occupy a central place in the media, including newspaper, radio, television, cinema, art, and music. (Korostelina, 2008). Social identity theory holds that one’s own groups, the in-group, may often be threatened when out-groups regarded as standing in opposition to the in-groups are perceived to be encroaching on the in-group’s physical or psychological territory. (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Indeed terrorism is likely to occur in groups and societies that draw sharp distinctions between the in-group and the out-group(s) and where out-groups members are dehumanized. Dehumanization is achieved when out-group values are contrasted sharply with those of the in-group and judged to be inferior (Schwartz, Struch, & Bilsky, 1990). Such group(s) or societies may then encourage members or citizens to displace their anger onto the out-group. (Moghaddam, 2005)

System justification theory seeks to understand how and why people provide cognitive and ideological support for the status quo and what the social and psychological consequences of supporting the status quo are, especially for members of disadvantaged groups (Jost, 2001). There are two major goals of system justification theory” (Jost & Banaji, 1994). The first is to understand how and why people provide cognitive and ideological support for the status quo, even when their support appears to conflict with personal and group interests (Haines & Jost, 2000). The second goal is to analyze the social and psychological consequences of supporting the status quo especially for members of disadvantaged groups (Jost & Burgess, 2000). A system justification perspective is a good complement to theories of social identification and social dominance because it devotes further (and novel) theoretical and empirical attention to some of their most cherished concepts, especially: status, power, perceived legitimacy, system stability, hierarchy enhancement, legitimizing myths, ideological consensus, and the presence or absence of cognitive alternatives to the status quo. System justification theory provides a useful connection to theories of social identification and social dominance by conceptualizing the social order not merely as something that is imposed by one group on another, but rather a collaborative psychological and ideological process by which existing structures of inequality are accommodated, justified, and rationalized by virtually everyone in society, including those who are most disadvantaged by the status quo.

System justification theory is a functional theory of social and political cognitive, which posits that attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes serve system justifying ends for individuals groups, and social systems. (Jost & Banaji, 1994). One of the main theoretical assumptions of this perspective is that people tend to use ideas about groups and individuals to justify the way things are, so that existing social arrangements are perceived as fair and legitimate, perhaps even natural and inevitable. This means that there may be a relatively general (but

not universal) directional bias in favour of the status quo; cognition, (Haines & Jost, 2000; Jost, Pelham & Carvallo, 2002). This theory suggests that members of both high and low status groups engage in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, that reinforce and legitimate existing social systems, and that out group favoritism refers to the tendency to express an evaluate preference for members of a group to which one does not belong.

Social dominance theory propounded by Sidanius and Pratto (1999) argues that intergroup oppression, discrimination, and prejudice are the means by which human societies organize themselves as group-based hierarchies, in which members of dominant groups secure a disproportionate share of the good things in life (e.g., powerful roles, good housing, good health services etc.) and members of subordinate groups receive a disproportionate share of the bad things in life (e.g., relatively poor housing and poor health). Sidanius et al., (1996) introduced the term “trimorphic structure” which consists of three distinctly different stratification system, all of which produce and maintain the hierarchies in societies: (1) An age system, in which adults and middle-age people have disproportionate social power over children and younger adults; (2) A gender system in which men have disproportionate social and political power compared to women; and (3) An arbitrary set system in which socially constructed categories are hierarchically arranged. These arbitrary sets may be constructed to associate power and legitimacy with social categories like race, ethnicity, nationality, social class, religion, or any other group distinction that human interaction is capable of constructing. Social dominance theory conceptualizes the age and gender system to be fixed over time and space, while the basis of the arbitrary-set system is said to be flexible and can change with different historical periods, social and political contexts, and the dynamics of the country in question. At the societal level, the degree of group based hierarchy is effected by and affects two mutually antagonistic set of forces: (1) hierarchy-enhancing and hierarchy-attenuating legitimizing ideologies, and (2) hierarchy-enhancing and hierarchy attenuating social institutions. Hierarchy-enhancing and hierarchy attenuating ideologies justify the establishment and maintenance of group based social inequality or its exact opposite, respectively. Hierarchy –enhancing and hierarchy-attenuating institutions engages in actions that either produce level of inequality or equality respectively at the societal level. Hierarchy enhancing social institution allocates social resources to the advantage of dominant group and to the disadvantage of the subordinate groups, whereas hierarchy attenuating social institutions have the opposite effect (Sidanius et al; 1996). Examples of hierarchy-enhancing institutions are internal security forces, large segments of criminal justice system, and most large corporations. Examples of hierarchy-attenuating institutions are human rights and civil right organizations, charities and legal aid group for the poor and the indigent (e.g., Sidanius et al; 1996).

In summary, social cognitive theory has it that an individual's perception of intent affects aggression and that the actions of terrorists are based on subjective interpretation of the world rather than objective reality. Social dominance theory simply posits that people who are high in social dominance orientation advocates that group based hierarchy should be maintained within the society based on any of the system which includes age system, gender system and arbitrary set system. System justification theory has it that people tend to maintain the existing status quo by using ideas they have about individuals and groups to justify it, so that the existing social order will be perceived as fair and legitimate.

Hypotheses

This hypothesis will be tested in this study.

Social dominance orientation will not significantly predict inclination to terrorism among young adults.

METHODS

Design/Statistics

The researcher employed a cross sectional design and a survey method because more than one sample were drawn from the population at one time. A multiple regression was applied as a statistics to analyze the data in order to test the hypothesis

Participants

A total of 161 undergraduates comprising of 66 males and 95 females were used in the study. The participants were drawn from Caritas University located in Enugu state, Nigeria. Stratified random sampling technique was employed to draw participants from the undergraduate students of four faculties of the university as follows: Faculty of Management and Social Sciences (47) students, Faculty of Engineering (39) students, Faculty of Natural Sciences (40) students and Faculty of Environmental Sciences (35) students. Among the one hundred and sixty one (161) sampled undergraduates, 16 were selected from 100 Level, 37 from 200 Level, 57 from 300 Level, 46 from 400 Level and 5 from 500 Level. Their age ranged from 16- 35 with mean and standard derivation of (M=21.35, SD= 2.51). it is important to note that the choice of undergraduates in this study is due to the high tendency of them becoming terrorists than the other population. The choice of students from these faculties was simply for convenience.

Instruments

Two instruments used in the study are social dominance orientation scale and terrorism inclination scale.

Social Dominance Orientation Scale

A 16-item social dominance orientation scale (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) designed to measure individuals desire to enhance/maintain or reduce group based hierarchy among various groups created/existing within the society. A seven point scale anchored by (1) very positive, (2) positive, (3) slightly positive, (4) neutral, (5) slightly negative, (6) negative and (7) very negative, was used to indicate agreement or disagreement with each item. A sample of the items are “Some groups of people are simply inferior to other group; Group equality should be our ideal.” A pilot study with the scale by Nwankwo, (2003) yielded a Cronbach alpha of .82. Items 1 to 8 on the scale have direct scoring format while items 9 to 16 have a revised scoring format. In interpreting the instrument, higher scores indicate higher social dominance orientation while lower scores indicate less social dominance orientation.

Terrorism Inclination Scale

A 10-item terrorism inclination scale (TIS) (Agbo & Ezeuduji, 2010) developed to measure the inclination to engage in the act of terror was adopted to measure inclination to terrorism in this study. The scale adopts a five-point Likert response scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) somewhat agree, (4) agree and, (5) strongly agree. Sample items from the scale include; “ if putting fear in people will make item them? believe in my ideas, I don't mind doing it; I can damage property and endanger life of civilians to stop the government or organization from carrying out their plan.” Agbo and Ezeuduji (2010) reported a Cronbach alpha reliability of .78 for the scale. A pilot study was conducted by the researcher using 100 undergraduates from Enugu and obtained an alpha reliability of .68. All the items in this scale have a direct scoring format. A composite score of Terrorism inclination scale will be obtained by summing up the responses of the respondents to all the items. Higher scores represent higher inclination to terrorism and vice versa.

Procedure

A total of 200 copies of the questionnaires containing the two scales namely: social dominance orientation scale and inclination to terrorism scale were distributed to the sampled undergraduates. Individual administration of the questionnaire was carried out by the researchers in the students' classes after their lectures. With the permission and help of their class representatives, the participants were encouraged to respond appropriately to the items in the questionnaires during their free periods and to return it to their respective class representatives

or the researchers. Finally, out of the two hundred copies of questionnaires administered, one hundred and sixty one were correctly filled and returned and were used for final analysis.

RESULTS

Table 1: The mean, standard deviation and inter-correlation among the control, independent and the dependent variables in the study.

	Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Gender	1.59	.49	1				
2.	Age	21.35	2.51	-.06	1			
3.	Level	2.92	1.02	.02	.45**	1		
4.	SDO	73.75	16.93	.09	.04	.01	1	
5.	Inclination to terrorism	26.74	11.47	.03	.03	.03	.38**	1

** $P < .01$, * $P < .05$, $N = 161$.

The correlation table reveals that social dominance orientation has a significant correlation with inclination to terrorism ($r = .38$, $p < .01$). There is also significant correlations between age and level ($r = .45$, $p < .01$). The sample data thus meet the assumptions for a regression.

To test the hypothesis, hierarchical regression analysis was conducted. Level, gender and age were first entered into the regression equation followed by social dominance orientation. The results of the regression analysis in Table 2 showed that the control variables account for .8% (ΔR^2) variance in inclination to terrorism which is not significant ($\Delta R^2 = .008$, $\Delta F .413 = .41$, ns). In the second hierarchical regression model, over and above the control variables, social dominance orientation accounted for 14.5% (ΔR^2) variance increase in inclination to terrorism which is significant ($\Delta R^2 = .145$, $\Delta F = 13.26$, $p < .001$).

Table 2: Model summary table of the control variables (Gender, age, and level), the independent variable (SDO) and the dependent variable (inclination to terrorism)

Model	R	R ²	Adj-R ²	Std Error of the Estimate	Change statistics				
					ΔR^2	ΔF	df 1	df 2	Sig
1	.088a	.008	-.011	11.53	.008	.413	3	157	.744
2	.391b	.153	.125	10.72	.145	13.26	2	155	.000

- Predictors (constant), level, gender, age.
- Predictors (constant), level, gender, age, SDO.

Discussion

The results of the analysis showed that the hypothesis which states that social dominance orientation will significantly predict inclination to terrorism among young adults was accepted ($\Delta R^2 = .145$, $\Delta F = 13.26$, $p < .001$). The result showed that social dominance orientation significantly predicted inclination to terrorism among young adults. The result corroborates an earlier finding of Lemineux and Asal (2010), which reported a significant positive relationship between social dominance orientation and inclination to terrorism. The reason for this finding can be attributed to legitimizing myths of an individual's social dominance orientation. The legitimizing myths can be referred to as the solid foundation on which the orientation of an individual's group to dominate or restore equality in the society is built on. These myths are the justifications that such groups use to support their orientation. Some of them includes: sexism, racism, nationalism, (hierarchy enhancing) on one hand, multiculturalism, universalism, (hierarchy attenuating) on the other hand. An individual whom belongs to a particular group would exhibit behaviour in relation with the out-groups that are in accordance with his legitimizing myths. An individual that believes that group based hierarchy should be maintained will be inclined to resort to act of terror if that is the only way of maintaining group based hierarchy and propagating its legitimizing myths. An individual that believes that group equality is ideal and should be practice anywhere, anytime is predispose to being inclined to act of terrorism as well if that is the viable means through which group equality will be maintained and its legitimizing myths propagated. Thus, propagation of the legitimizing myths and seeing its manifestation can be said to be the underlying factor that increases inclination to terrorism among young adults.

Implications of Findings

There are several implications of the findings of this study and several deductions can be made that can benefit the society at large. The result shows that increase in social dominance orientation correlates with increase in inclination to terrorism among young adults. This implies that in a society where the social dominance orientation level of majority of its young adults is ever increasing especially in the hierarchy-enhancing direction is likely to be experiencing constant destruction of lives and properties, discrimination in various aspects of life (such as remuneration, health services, distribution of social amenities, employment opportunities. etc) based on any criteria created between the group that refer to itself as superior and the one perceived to be inferior. This will create fear, hatred, and sense of insecurity which will hinder peaceful co-existence, innovation, investment and economic growth in that society. In addition, this study will help people and the

government in our society in their fight against terrorism to recognize the efficacy of social dominance orientation in predisposing our vibrant young adults to inclining to terrorism and develop strategies with which to tackle it.

From the result, social dominance orientation is a significant factor in inclination to terrorism. Therefore, there is an urgent need to re-orientate our people on inclination to terrorism and its derogatory effects on the individual concern and the society at large. On the issue of social dominance orientation, the stakeholders in the various facets of our society whether (secular or sacred) should endeavour to shun group inequality in all ramifications and to canvas for and practice group equality anytime, anywhere, in order to promote tolerance, harmonious co-existence, and development in our society. In addition, the legitimizing myths of group equality which includes: universal human rights, multiculturalism, etc. should be upheld at all cost by everyone.

Conclusion

Based on the outcome of this study, the following suggestions are made for future researchers.

- Primarily, future researchers should increase their sample size in subsequent studies.
- Since the present study used university undergraduates, future researchers should use secondary school students in future studies to know if similar findings may be observed.
- Future researchers should also look at other variables in relation to inclination to terrorism such as religion, locality, and economic status.

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