JOURNAL OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE
ISSN Print: 2992-2763 – ISSN Online: 2992-4618 | Vol. 4, No. 3 / September, 2026
https://www.jopd.com.ng

REINTEGRATION OF REPENTANT BOKO HARAM MEMBERS THROUGH OPERATION SAFE CORRIDOR: VICTIMS' CONCERNS AND EMERGING SECURITY CHALLENGES IN MAIDUGURI, NIGERIA.

BY

EDIBA SABASTINE
Department of Political Science, Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State.
Email Address: edibasabastine@gmail.com Phone No: 08060736848

PROF. LINDA KWON-NDUNG
Department of Political Science, Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State.
Email Address: kwonlinda77@gmail.com

DR. UGWU ANTHONY CHINEDU
Department of Political Science, Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State.
Email Address:chinedugwu5@gmail.com
DOI:https://doi.org/10.57233/jopd.v4i3.12

Abstract

The reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members through Operation Safe Corridor (OSC) has generated concerns among victims and conflict-affected communities in Maiduguri, particularly regarding public safety, trust, and the sustainability of peace. This study examined victims' perceptions and concerns regarding the reintegration process and assessed its implications for community safety and security in Maiduguri, Nigeria. The study was anchored on Social Reintegration Theory, which emphasises rehabilitation, community acceptance, victim involvement, and social trust as essential conditions for successful reintegration. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised victims of Boko Haram insurgency, internally displaced persons, and residents of conflict-affected communities in Maiduguri. Using Taro Yamane's formula, a sample size of 400 respondents was determined, while 377 completed questionnaires were retrieved and analysed. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analysed using frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations with SPSS. Findings revealed that respondents expressed strong concerns about the genuineness of the deradicalisation process, inadequate consideration of victims' fears and trauma, and limited confidence in OSC's screening and reintegration mechanisms. The findings also showed that respondents perceived reintegration as contributing to renewed security threats, inadequate monitoring, increased insecurity, and reduced public confidence in community safety. The study concluded that OSC has not sufficiently addressed victims' security and psychosocial concerns. It recommended a victim-centred and community-driven reintegration approach, strengthened post-reintegration monitoring, and comprehensive psychosocial support, compensation, and justice mechanisms for victims.

Keywords: Operation Safe Corridor; Repentant Boko Haram; Reintegration; Victims; Security challenges.

Introduction

Violent extremism, terrorism, and armed conflicts remain significant threats to international peace, security, and sustainable development, prompting countries such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Colombia, Rwanda, and Afghanistan to adopt Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) programmes to facilitate the transition of former combatants into civilian life. Although traditionally associated with post-conflict settings, reintegration has increasingly been applied during ongoing conflicts to prevent re-recruitment, reduce renewed violence, and promote community stability (United Nations, 2019; United Nations Department of Peace Operations, 2025). However, community distrust of former combatants can undermine such programmes and raise security concerns (Clubb & Tapley, 2018). This challenge is particularly evident in Africa, where violent extremist groups continue to destabilise communities and weaken state institutions. In the Lake Chad Basin, comprising Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, and Niger, the activities of Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) have resulted in loss of lives, destruction of property, displacement, economic disruption, food insecurity, and social dislocation, reinforcing the need for effective reintegration and peacebuilding interventions (Omotuyi, 2022).

The Boko Haram insurgency has emerged as one of the deadliest terrorist conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa, with violence extending across Nigeria and the wider Lake Chad Basin, including Cameroon, Chad, and Niger (Amao, 2020). The conflict has resulted in substantial loss of life, displacement, economic disruption, food insecurity, and social dislocation. The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP, 2020) reported that Boko Haram was responsible for approximately 2,040 deaths globally, while IEP (2022) recorded a 49% increase in terrorist attacks in Nigeria between 2020 and 2021. Similarly, UNHCR (2020) estimated that about 3.2 million people had been displaced across the Lake Chad region, demonstrating the scale and persistence of the humanitarian and security crisis.

In Nigeria, the Boko Haram insurgency intensified significantly, resulting in bombings, kidnappings, assassinations, attacks on security installations, destruction of public infrastructure, and mass killings, particularly in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States (Ike et al., 2024). These activities have disrupted agriculture, commerce, education, healthcare, and livelihoods, while placing considerable pressure on Nigeria's security and humanitarian institutions (Hassan, 2022). The destruction has also imposed substantial reconstruction costs on the Northeast, with the World Bank (2016) estimating billions of dollars in recovery needs. Beyond the region, terrorism and organised violence have continued to expose vulnerabilities in Nigeria's security architecture, as demonstrated by the 2022 Abuja–Kaduna train attack and the Kuje custodial centre attack, which resulted in deaths, abductions, and the escape of hundreds of inmates (Ewokor, 2022; Khalid & Davies, 2022).

In response to the persistent Boko Haram insurgency, the Nigerian government adopted both kinetic military operations and non-kinetic measures focused on de-radicalisation, rehabilitation, reconciliation, and reintegration. A major non-kinetic initiative is Operation Safe Corridor (OSC), established in 2015 to facilitate the voluntary surrender, rehabilitation, and reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members through psychological counselling, vocational training, religious reorientation, civic education, and social rehabilitation (Ugwueze, Ngwu, & Onuoha, 2022). However, the programme has generated concerns among victims and affected communities, many of whom remain sceptical about the sincerity

of former insurgents' reform and their potential return to violence (Ogunnubi & Ajayi, 2024; Onapajo & Ozden, 2020). Such concerns are closely associated with the trauma arising from loss of lives, destruction of property, displacement, abductions, and prolonged exposure to insurgent violence and insecurity.

Reintegration programmes may place greater emphasis on rehabilitating former insurgents and reducing recidivism while giving insufficient attention to the emotional, psychological, and socio-economic needs of victims and affected communities, thereby generating resentment, mistrust, and fear and undermining community acceptance and social healing (Felbab-Brown, 2018; Clubb & Tapley, 2018). In Nigeria, these challenges are compounded by trauma arising from exposure to violence, loss of loved ones, displacement, abductions, and prolonged insecurity, which can weaken social trust and influence perceptions of security and reconciliation. In Boko Haram-affected communities in Borno, Adamawa, and Kaduna States, such traumatic experiences have contributed to scepticism about the genuine reform of former insurgents and resistance to their reintegration into civilian society (Ike et al., 2024).

Therefore, in communities in and around Maiduguri, Borno State, as well as other Boko Haram-affected areas of Adamawa and Kaduna States, traumatic experiences arising from violence, displacement, and loss have influenced perceptions of former insurgents and generated scepticism regarding the sincerity of their reform and reintegration (Littman et al., 2021; Ike et al., 2022). These experiences have contributed to fear, distrust, stigma, and resistance towards reintegration, particularly among victims who perceive that government interventions give greater attention to former insurgents than to those who suffered from the insurgency (Felbab-Brown, 2018; Owonikoko, 2022). Moreover, limited community participation, inadequate monitoring mechanisms, persistent insecurity, displacement, and insufficient attention to victims' concerns continue to undermine confidence in Operation Safe Corridor and raise important questions about its capacity to promote sustainable peace and community security (International Crisis Group, 2021; Ugwueze, Ngwu, & Onuoha, 2022).

It is against this backdrop that the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members through Operation Safe Corridor, particularly its implications for victims and community security, has attracted increasing scholarly and policy attention in Nigeria. The study therefore focused on victims' experiences and concerns regarding the reintegration process in Maiduguri. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to examine victims' perceptions and concerns regarding the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members through Operation Safe Corridor in Maiduguri, Nigeria, and to assess the extent to which the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members through Operation Safe Corridor influences community safety and security in Maiduguri, Nigeria. The findings are expected to provide useful evidence for strengthening reintegration policies, addressing victims' concerns, enhancing community confidence, and promoting sustainable peace and security in Maiduguri.

Statement of the Problem

Operation Safe Corridor (OSC) represents an important component of Nigeria's non-kinetic response to the Boko Haram insurgency, particularly through the deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration of former insurgents. However, the central problem is that the reintegration of former Boko Haram members takes place within communities where

victims continue to live with the consequences of violence, including loss of relatives, displacement, destruction of property, abduction, and psychological trauma. Consequently, the return of former insurgents presents a difficult peacebuilding dilemma: while reintegration may contribute to reducing violent extremism and preventing re-recruitment, it may also generate fear, mistrust, stigma, and perceptions of insecurity among victims and other community members. The challenge, therefore, is not simply whether former insurgents can be rehabilitated, but whether their reintegration can occur in ways that address victims' concerns and promote confidence in community safety and sustainable peace.

Several studies have examined Boko Haram deradicalisation and reintegration in Nigeria, including Clubb and Tapley (2018) on community acceptance and social healing, Onapajo and Ozden (2020) on non-military counterterrorism strategies, Ike et al., (2025) on community perceptions, Ugwueze, Ngwu, and Onuoha (2022) and Owonikoko (2022) on Operation Safe Corridor and community receptivity, and Ogunnubi and Ajayi (2024) on the programme's counterterrorism implications. However, despite these contributions, the specific experiences and concerns of victims in Maiduguri regarding how the reintegration of former Boko Haram members affects community safety and security remain insufficiently examined. Given Maiduguri's centrality to the insurgency and the continued presence of affected populations, this study therefore focuses on victims' perceptions of the reintegration process and its implications for justice, community safety, and sustainable peace, with the aim of informing more victim-sensitive and community-responsive reintegration policies.

Literature Review

The Nigerian government's adoption of non-kinetic approaches to counterterrorism reflects the recognition that military operations alone cannot adequately address the ideological, social, and psychological dimensions of Boko Haram insurgency. Consequently, deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration became important components of Nigeria's counterterrorism strategy. Onapajo and Ozden (2020) argue that these approaches are necessary complements to military operations because terrorism cannot be effectively addressed through force alone. Similarly, Ugwueze et al. (2022) found that Operation Safe Corridor (OSC) represents an important attempt by the Nigerian government to disengage, rehabilitate, and reintegrate former Boko Haram fighters, although inadequate incorporation of local communities remains a significant challenge. Hassan (2022) also observed that while OSC has made progress in deradicalisation and rehabilitation, its credibility and acceptance among affected communities remain problematic. These findings suggest that successful reintegration requires more than rehabilitating former insurgents; it requires creating conditions under which receiving communities consider their return legitimate and safe.

Community acceptance has consequently emerged as an important issue in the literature. Owonikoko (2022) found that communities in northeastern Nigeria were often unwilling to accept reintegrated former Boko Haram members because of distrust and perceptions that government assistance favoured former insurgents over victims. Such perceptions may produce stigma, social exclusion, and resistance to reintegration. Similarly, Omotuyi (2022) identified important weaknesses in OSC and argued that these limitations contribute to public opposition to the programme. Earlier, Felbab-Brown (2018) observed that reintegration initiatives may generate resentment where victims perceive that former combatants receive greater attention than those affected by their actions. The International Crisis Group (2021)

further reported that affected communities remain concerned about the credibility of the rehabilitation process, the sincerity of returnees, and the possibility of renewed violence. These concerns are important because perceptions of fairness, accountability, and security can determine whether reintegration is regarded as a genuine peacebuilding intervention or as an injustice to victims.

Victims' experiences and trauma also constitute significant dimensions of the reintegration process. Clubb and Tapley (2018) argue that reintegration programmes that concentrate excessively on former combatants without adequately addressing victims and community reconciliation may struggle to achieve sustainable peace. In Boko Haram-affected communities, experiences of killings, abductions, displacement, destruction of property, and prolonged insecurity may generate resentment and mistrust towards former insurgents. Ike et al. (2024) found that agonising experiences and resentment over incentives provided to former Boko Haram defectors could constitute barriers to reintegration, while greater involvement of victims and communities in programme design could improve the prospects of successful reintegration. Ike et al. (2024) therefore demonstrate that victims should not be treated merely as passive recipients of reintegration policies but as important stakeholders whose experiences shape community responses to former insurgents.

Recent evidence further emphasises the importance of addressing victims' psychological and social experiences. Ike et al. (2025) found that a group-integrated cognitive behavioural intervention could assist affected victims in managing depression and trauma while potentially improving their willingness to accept former Boko Haram members. More recently, Ike, Jidong, Ike, Ike, and Ayobi (2026) reported that trauma-informed intervention was feasible and acceptable among affected victims and could contribute to improving receptiveness towards reintegration. These findings reinforce the argument that rehabilitation should not focus exclusively on former insurgents but should also address victims' psychological recovery, social trust, and participation in the reintegration process.

The literature also identifies important security implications associated with reintegration. Reintegration may contribute to community security by removing individuals from terrorist organisations, reducing the pool of active combatants, facilitating disengagement, and providing alternative livelihoods. However, concerns about recidivism, concealed extremist beliefs, inadequate monitoring, and possible renewed association with terrorist networks may weaken public confidence in the process (Felbab-Brown, 2018; Onapajo & Ozden, 2020). Ugwueze et al. (2022) similarly noted that the effectiveness of OSC is constrained by challenges associated with community acceptance and reintegration. Yakasai et al. (2022) also identified concerns surrounding the sustainability and security implications of reintegrating former Boko Haram members. These concerns are particularly significant in communities where victims continue to experience insecurity and where former insurgents are expected to return to the same social environments in which their activities previously caused harm.

Community participation has therefore been identified as an important mechanism for strengthening both reintegration and local security. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2022) emphasised the importance of community sensitisation, psychosocial support, traditional and religious leadership, livelihood interventions, and social cohesion in facilitating the return of persons associated with Boko Haram. Similarly, Atom

(2025) found that stakeholders involved in Operation Safe Corridor expressed both reservations about the programme and recognition of its potential contribution to security. These findings suggest that successful reintegration requires collaboration between government institutions, security agencies, victims, religious leaders, traditional authorities, civil society organisations, and host communities.

The reviewed literature reveals three related gaps. First, although existing studies have examined Operation Safe Corridor, deradicalisation, community acceptance, trauma, and reintegration across northeastern Nigeria, there is limited context-specific evidence on Maiduguri, despite its centrality to the Boko Haram insurgency (Onapajo & Ozden, 2020; Ugwueze et al., 2022; Owonikoko, 2022). Second, much of the literature focuses broadly on communities, former combatants, and programme stakeholders, with comparatively limited attention to victims as a distinct group and their concerns regarding justice, trust, safety, and reintegration (Ike et al., 2025). Third, while previous studies have identified concerns about recidivism, community acceptance, monitoring, and renewed violence, limited empirical attention has been given to how victims in Maiduguri assess the implications of reintegration for community safety and security. This study therefore addresses these contextual, population, and outcome gaps by examining victims' perceptions and concerns regarding the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members through Operation Safe Corridor and its implications for community safety and security in Maiduguri.

Theoretical Framework: Social Reintegration Theory

Social Reintegration Theory is rooted in criminology, restorative justice, and post-conflict peacebuilding and explains how individuals formerly involved in criminal or violent activities can return to civilian society through rehabilitation, reconciliation, acceptance, and social support. The theory is closely associated with Braithwaite's (1989) concept of reintegrative shaming, which advocates condemning harmful behaviour while avoiding permanent stigmatisation of the offender, thereby creating opportunities for behavioural change and social reintegration. It is also informed by Zehr's (2002) restorative justice perspective, which emphasises repairing the harm caused by wrongdoing through the participation of offenders, victims, communities, and relevant institutions.

The theory applies to this study because the reintegration of former Boko Haram members involves more than their physical return to civilian communities after deradicalisation and rehabilitation. In relation to the first objective, which examines victims' perceptions and concerns regarding the reintegration process, the theory provides a basis for understanding how trust, acceptance, perceived justice, stigma, and opportunities for victims to participate in reconciliation can shape their responses to former insurgents. From the perspective of Social Reintegration Theory, successful reintegration requires victims and receiving communities to have confidence that former insurgents have genuinely changed and that the harm caused by their previous actions is being acknowledged and addressed. Thus, victims' scepticism, resentment, fear, or willingness to accept former insurgents can be understood as important indicators of the extent to which the social conditions necessary for reintegration have been achieved.

A major strength of Social Reintegration Theory is that it conceptualises reintegration as a shared social process involving former offenders, victims, communities, and state institutions,

rather than as a process centred exclusively on rehabilitating former combatants. This makes it particularly suitable for analysing Operation Safe Corridor and its implications for victims and community security. However, the theory may assume a level of willingness to forgive or accept former offenders that may not exist where communities have experienced severe violence, loss, displacement, and trauma. This limitation is important in the present study because victims may continue to perceive former Boko Haram members as security threats despite their completion of rehabilitation programmes. Consequently, the theory provides both an explanatory framework for assessing the conditions necessary for successful reintegration and a basis for critically examining whether those conditions exist among victims and communities in Maiduguri.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine victims' concerns regarding the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members through Operation Safe Corridor and the associated security challenges in Maiduguri, Nigeria. The study population comprised victims of Boko Haram insurgency, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and residents of conflict-affected communities in Maiduguri. Using Taro Yamane's formula, a sample size of 400 respondents was determined, of which 377 completed questionnaires were retrieved and analysed. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire, while descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations, were used for data analysis with the aid of SPSS. A benchmark mean of 2.50 was adopted, with mean scores of 2.50 and above indicating agreement, while scores below 2.50 indicated disagreement.

Presentation of Data

This section presents the responses of respondents on each questionnaire item relating to victims' concerns regarding the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members through Operation Safe Corridor and the emerging security challenges in Maiduguri, Nigeria.

Table 1: Victims' Perceptions and Concerns Regarding the Reintegration of Repentant Boko Haram Members (N = 377)

Questionnaire Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.
The reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members makes me feel unsafe.	149	112	48	39	29	4.04	1.14
I do not believe that most repentant Boko Haram members have genuinely abandoned violent extremism.	138	121	46	42	30	3.98	1.16
I have little confidence in the government's deradicalisation and screening process under Operation Safe Corridor.	144	109	53	40	31	3.98	1.18
Victims' concerns are ignored during the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members.	157	104	41	45	30	4.04	1.19
The reintegration programme has failed to address the fears and trauma of Boko Haram victims.	151	116	39	43	28	4.06	1.15

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 1 presents respondents' perceptions and concerns regarding the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members through Operation Safe Corridor in Maiduguri. The findings reveal that all the statements recorded mean scores above the decision benchmark of 2.50, indicating that respondents agreed with the concerns raised. Specifically, respondents strongly agreed that the reintegration programme has failed to address the fears and trauma of Boko Haram victims (Mean = 4.06, Std. Dev. = 1.15). This was followed by the opinion that the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members makes them feel unsafe (Mean = 4.04, Std. Dev. = 1.14) and that victims' concerns are ignored during the reintegration process (Mean = 4.04, Std. Dev. = 1.19). Similarly, respondents agreed that they have little confidence in the government's deradicalisation and screening process under Operation Safe Corridor (Mean = 3.98, Std. Dev. = 1.18) and do not believe that most repentant Boko Haram members have genuinely abandoned violent extremism (Mean = 3.98, Std. Dev. = 1.16).

The standard deviations, which ranged from 1.14 to 1.19, indicate relatively high variability in respondents' opinions, suggesting that although the majority expressed concerns about the reintegration programme, their levels of agreement differed in intensity. Overall, the findings imply that victims in Maiduguri remain apprehensive about the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members and have limited confidence in the effectiveness of the government's deradicalisation and reintegration efforts.

Table 2: Reintegration and Community Safety and Security (N = 377)

Questionnaire Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.
The reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members has increased insecurity in my community.	154	113	44	38	28	4.09	1.13
The presence of reintegrated former Boko Haram members exposes communities to renewed security threats.	162	101	47	39	28	4.10	1.16
Operation Safe Corridor has not improved peace and security in Maiduguri.	147	115	45	42	28	4.04	1.15
The monitoring of reintegrated former Boko Haram members is inadequate to guarantee community safety.	159	108	43	40	27	4.11	1.13
The reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members has reduced public confidence in community security.	145	119	46	39	28	4.04	1.13

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 2 shows respondents' assessment of the influence of the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members on community safety and security in Maiduguri. The results indicate that all the statements recorded mean scores above the benchmark mean of 2.50, suggesting that respondents perceived the reintegration programme as posing significant security concerns. The highest mean score was recorded for the statement that the monitoring of reintegrated former Boko Haram members is inadequate to guarantee community safety (Mean = 4.11, Std. Dev. = 1.13). This was followed by the view that the presence of reintegrated former

Boko Haram members exposes communities to renewed security threats (Mean = 4.10, Std. Dev. = 1.16) and that the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members has increased insecurity in the community (Mean = 4.09, Std. Dev. = 1.13). Respondents also agreed that Operation Safe Corridor has not improved peace and security in Maiduguri (Mean = 4.04, Std. Dev. = 1.15) and that the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members has reduced public confidence in community security (Mean = 4.04, Std. Dev. = 1.13).

The standard deviations, ranging from 1.13 to 1.16, suggest moderate variability in respondents' opinions, indicating that although there were slight differences in the level of agreement, the respondents generally shared similar concerns regarding the security implications of the reintegration programme. The findings therefore imply that victims and residents perceive the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members through Operation Safe Corridor as contributing to insecurity, weakening public confidence, and creating emerging security challenges in Maiduguri.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that victims and residents of conflict-affected communities in Maiduguri expressed strong concerns regarding the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members through Operation Safe Corridor. Respondents agreed that the reintegration programme has failed to address the fears and trauma of victims, ignored victims' concerns during the reintegration process, and weakened confidence in the government's deradicalisation and screening procedures. The findings further showed that many respondents doubted the genuineness of the deradicalisation process, believing that some repentant Boko Haram members may not have genuinely renounced violent extremism. These findings suggest that victims remain sceptical of the programme and perceive the reintegration process as inadequately addressing their security and psychosocial concerns.

The study also found that the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members is perceived to have significant implications for community safety and security in Maiduguri. Respondents believed that the presence of reintegrated former insurgents exposes communities to renewed security threats, increases insecurity, and reduces public confidence in community safety. They further agreed that the monitoring mechanisms for reintegrated former fighters are inadequate and that Operation Safe Corridor has not significantly improved peace and security in the area. These findings imply that while the programme seeks to promote peace through rehabilitation and reintegration, its implementation has not sufficiently reassured victims or strengthened public confidence in community security.

The findings are consistent with previous empirical studies. Onapajo and Ozden (2020) observed that Operation Safe Corridor has largely prioritised the rehabilitation of former insurgents while paying inadequate attention to the concerns of victims and host communities, thereby creating distrust toward the programme. Similarly, Felbab-Brown (2018) reported that the limited involvement of affected communities and insufficient attention to victims' trauma undermined public acceptance of reintegrated Boko Haram members. Omotuyi (2022) also found that inadequate community participation, weak monitoring mechanisms, and limited trust-building measures reduced the effectiveness of reintegration efforts in north-eastern Nigeria. Likewise, Brechenmacher (2019) argued that the absence of effective

accountability and community engagement in reintegration programmes contributed to persistent fear and insecurity among conflict-affected populations.

The findings are further supported by the Social Reintegration Theory, which posits that successful reintegration depends not only on the rehabilitation of former offenders but also on victims' acceptance, community trust, and effective institutional support. The theory maintains that reintegration efforts are unlikely to achieve sustainable peace where victims perceive injustice, exclusion, inadequate monitoring, and continuing security risks. Therefore, the concerns expressed by respondents underscore the need for reintegration policies that place greater emphasis on victims' participation, accountability, trust-building, and community security alongside the rehabilitation of former insurgents.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members through Operation Safe Corridor is perceived negatively by victims and residents of conflict-affected communities in Maiduguri due to concerns over the genuineness of the deradicalisation process, inadequate consideration of victims' fears and trauma, weak community involvement, and insufficient monitoring of reintegrated former insurgents. Although the programme was designed to promote rehabilitation, reconciliation, and sustainable peace, it has not significantly improved public confidence in community safety or reduced fears of renewed insecurity. The study therefore concluded that the success of Operation Safe Corridor depends on adopting a more victim-centred and community-driven approach that prioritises accountability, trust-building, effective monitoring, and the security concerns of affected communities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

i. The Federal Government should adopt a victim-centred approach to the implementation of Operation Safe Corridor by actively involving victims and host communities in the planning and reintegration process to promote trust, reconciliation, and social acceptance.
ii. Government and security agencies should strengthen the monitoring and post-reintegration supervision of repentant Boko Haram members to minimise the risk of recidivism and enhance community safety and public confidence.
iii. Comprehensive psychosocial support, compensation, and justice mechanisms should be provided for victims of Boko Haram insurgency to address their trauma, promote healing, and ensure that reintegration efforts are balanced with the rights and welfare of affected communities.

References

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association.

Amao, O. B. (2020). A decade of terror: Revisiting Nigeria's interminable Boko Haram insurgency. *Security Journal, 33*(3), 357–375. doi:10.1057/s41284-020-00232-8

Atom, C. (2025). Guardians of peace, victims of betrayal: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of military personnel navigating scepticism, trust, and hope in Nigeria's Operation Safe Corridor. *Journal for Deradicalization, 44*, 87–124.

Braithwaite, J. (1989). *Crime, shame and reintegration*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Brechenmacher, S. (2019). *Stabilizing Northeast Nigeria after Boko Haram*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Clubb, G., & Tapley, M. (2018). Conceptualising de-radicalisation and former combatant re-integration in Nigeria. *Third World Quarterly, 39*(11), 2053–2068. doi:10.1080/01436597.2018.1458303

Ewokor, C. (2022, March 29). Nigeria train attack: Dozens feared kidnapped after Abuja-Kaduna rail attack. *BBC News*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-60910239

Felbab-Brown, V. (2018). *The limits of punishment: Transitional justice and violent extremism*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Hassan, I. (2022). Reintegrating ex-combatants: An assessment of Operation Safe Corridor. *Journal for Deradicalization, 33*, 150–180.

Hassan, I., & Routley, L. (2022). *Operation Safe Corridor: The deradicalisation and reintegration of ex-combatants*. Newcastle, England: Newcastle University. doi:10.57711/gtwa-r030

Ike, T. J., Jidong, D. E., & Ayobi, E. E. (2024). Improving affected victims and community reintegration of former Boko Haram terrorist defectors in Nigeria: A community-informed participatory action research. *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict, 18*(1), 103–118. doi:10.1080/17467586.2024.2407937

Ike, T. J., Jidong, D. E., Ayobi, E. E., & Francis, C. (2025). Victims of affected communities' experiences of a legal education plus trauma-informed therapy compared to a media orientation intervention to improve reintegration of former Boko Haram members in Nigeria: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *African Identities*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1080/14725843.2025.2548899

Ike, T. J., Jidong, D. E., Ike, M. L., Ike, P. R., & Ayobi, E. E. (2026). Improving victims' receptiveness of the reintegration of former Boko Haram members in Nigeria: A

mixed method intervention study. *Journal of International Humanitarian Action, 11*, Article 7. doi:10.1186/s41018-026-00191-6

Institute for Economics & Peace. (2020). *Global terrorism index 2020: Measuring the impact of terrorism*. Sydney, Australia: Institute for Economics & Peace.

Institute for Economics & Peace. (2022). *Global terrorism index 2022: Measuring the impact of terrorism*. Sydney, Australia: Institute for Economics & Peace.

International Crisis Group. (2021). *An exit from Boko Haram? Assessing Nigeria's Operation Safe Corridor* (Africa Report No. 170). Brussels, Belgium: International Crisis Group.

Khalid, I., & Davies, D. (2022, July 6). Hundreds of inmates escape after attack on Nigeria prison. *NPR*. https://www.npr.org/2022/07/06/1109977370

Littman, R., O'Neil, S., Van Broeckhoven, K., Bukar, M., & Marks, Z. (2021). *Community acceptance of former Boko Haram affiliates* (MEAC Findings Report 7). United Nations University

Omotuyi, S. (2022). Operation Safe Corridor: The missing components in Nigeria's deradicalisation programme as an effective counterterrorism strategy in Northeast. *African Journal of Terrorism and Insurgency Research, 3*(1), 97–125. doi:10.31920/2732-5008/2022/v3n1a5

Onapajo, H., & Ozden, K. (2020). Non-military approach against terrorism in Nigeria: Deradicalization strategies and challenges in countering Boko Haram. *Security Journal, 33*(3), 476–492. doi:10.1057/s41284-020-00238-2

Owonikoko, S. B. (2022). "Take them to Government House or Aso Rock": Community receptivity to reintegration of Operation Safe Corridor's deradicalised ex-Boko Haram members in Northeastern Nigeria. *Cogent Social Sciences, 8*(1), Article 2015884. doi:10.1080/23311886.2021.2015884

Ugwueze, M. I., Ngwu, E. C., & Onuoha, F. C. (2022). Operation Safe Corridor programme and reintegration of ex-Boko Haram fighters in Nigeria. *Journal of Asian and African Studies, 57*(6), 1229–1248. doi:10.1177/00219096211047996

United Nations Development Programme. (2022). *Conflict-sensitive return and reintegration of individuals perceived as associated with Boko Haram in Nigeria: Towards reconciliation and recovery*. New York, NY: United Nations Development Programme.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2020). *Nigeria emergency*. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

United Nations. (2006). *Integrated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration standards*. New York, NY: United Nations.

World Bank. (2016). *The socio-economic impact of the Boko Haram insurgency in Northeast Nigeria*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Yakasai, B. A., Shekwolo, D. M., Wellington, T. A., & Yakasai, H. B. (2022). Public perception on the influence of de-radicalisation and reintegration of the repentant Boko Haram in North East Nigeria. *Acta Scientific Women's Health, 4*(9), 38–45. doi:10.31080/ASWH.2022.04.0423

Zehr, H. (2002). *The little book of restorative justice*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.