British Journal of Interdisciplinary Research **November 2025, Volume 2, Number 9, pp. 29-44**
ISSN 3049-8899

STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTING TERRORISM FINANCING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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Abstract

This paper aims to provide strategies for preventing terrorism financing in developing countries. A qualitative study using a descriptive synthesis of selected recommendations from reliable databases and grey literature from reputable organisations. This study found that the approach to preventing terrorism financing of all kinds should be similar, especially in developing nations. 31 strategies were identified. For effectiveness, the strategies should be combined. Future studies may consider using interview data from counter-terrorism and countering the financing of terrorism experts or comparing the strategies used in other developed countries to assess which methods are most effective and efficient for developing countries. Countering the Financing of Terrorism through conventional institutions and other alternative means is crucial to stopping terrorism and organised crime in developing nations. A primary recommendation was that relevant central authorities implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in developing countries for easy coordination. Considering that 2030 is the timeline for the SDGs, more efforts are required to achieve milestones within the available time. Prioritising the 17 SDG goals should start by resolving environmental issues as a foundation for attaining societal and economic needs using a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. This study assessed the adoption of a combination strategy or an integrated approach to disrupting terrorism financing and its emerging links with organised crime in developing countries.

Keywords: *Developing Countries, Terrorism, Terrorism Financing, Prevention, Organised Crime.*

DOI: 10.31039/bjir.v2i9.90

1. INTRODUCTION

National Bureau of Statistics reported that 2.23 million Nigerians were abducted in one year, and kidnappers raked in NGN2.2 trillion ransom (Daily trust, 2024).

The issue of terrorism has been perceived to be a phenomenon that is influenced by an ideology. However, in recent times, terrorism has been linked to organised criminal activities because criminals have adopted terrorism as a means of sustaining their criminal enterprise (Umar, 2024). Organised crime is nonideological because criminal organisations are not necessarily guided by political or religious motivations (Calderoni et al., 2022). Consequently, the existing links between terrorism financing and organised crime would form the basis for identifying the necessary integrated strategies to prevent terrorism financing, especially in developing countries where it is most prevalent (Prah & Chanimbe, 2021).

Terrorism is known to damage sustainable economic development, peace and security in any location it is found; therefore, this necessitates countering terrorism (Kalokoh, 2024). The measures of countering terrorism are disrupting its financing; however, despite the preventive countering the financing of terrorism measures put in place by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), terrorism is still being financed undetected in many countries due to the focus on the financial sector. It has been revealed that the disclosures by banks or financial institutions alone cannot prevent the financing of terrorism or yield the desired results (Teichmann & Falker, 2024). Terrorism financing is an activity linked to financial crime, and its modus operandi is also identical to organised crime groups (Teichmann & Falker, 2024). Therefore, based on the focus on developing countries in this study, the West African sub-region was found to have adopted strategies for preventing and countering terrorism and are generally influenced by transnational security challenges in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sub-region. Still, these strategies have not been effective (Prah & Chanimbe, 2021). These prevention strategies are expected to discourage groups with violent motives from engaging in terrorism, thereby creating a stable and conducive environment for innocent citizens (Prah & Chanimbe, 2021). Consequently, integrated strategies must be outlined to prevent terrorism financing, especially in developing countries.

This paper aims to provide strategies for preventing terrorism financing in developing countries using a descriptive synthesis of purposefully selected recommendations from journal articles in reliable databases and grey literature from reputable organisations. An expected outcome is that developing countries adopt these integrated strategies to prevent terrorism financing and organised crime. The developing countries in Africa are in focus for this study to assess the existing links between terrorism financing and organised crime to potentially show the nonideological nature of organised crimes. Hence, the central research question to guide the study is, “What are the integrated strategies to prevent terrorism financing in developing countries?”

The main objectives of the study are to examine the strategies for preventing terrorism financing and organise crime in developing countries. The specific objectives are:

1. To itemise the strategies suggested in the literature for preventing terrorism financing in developing countries.

2. To describe the strategies suggested in the literature for preventing organised crime in developing countries.

Other sections are the literature review, which discusses the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical review; the qualitative methodology adopted; results and discussion; and conclusions. Finally, recommendations were made after synthesising all the listed strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The two main variables of terrorism financing and organised crime are conceptualised in the context of this study.

Organised Crime

Organised crime groups are made up of two or more persons involved in high-level criminal enterprises to generate profits from criminal activities; consequently, organised crime groups are involved with proceeds-generating crimes (Jupp & Garrod, 2022). Organised crime group members display intense social interactions to gain an edge to achieve illicit goals; they exert social control, gain respect, and establish hierarchical structures through the creation of fear; they operate by intimidating targeted persons with actual or potential use of threats and violence (Salvato et al., 2023). This modus operandi is sustained through their extensive social networks to manage group cohesion, and they promote proceed-generating activities (Salvato et al., 2023).

Organised crime is generally defined as affiliations between organised criminal groups and their clients, who are consumers of illicit goods and services; it is also perceived to be the existence of criminal networks that carry out routine operations for long periods to generate profit from criminal activities (Hopkins et al., 2024). Organised crime is a nonideological activity that does not have political or religious motivations; it is profit-oriented through criminal proceeds with the hope of continuity to perpetuate illegal profits. Organised crime uses threats and violence through an internal organisation, which may not be a formal hierarchy; it involves social interaction such as compromising public officials, controlling legal activities and influencing politics (Calderoni et al., 2022).

Terrorism financing

In recent times, terrorism has metamorphosed into an organised criminal activity that is characterised by taking control of areas without adequate government control to illegally obtain mineral resources like oil and gas, wildlife flora and fauna, precious metals and stones; they also extort the population, seize available historical artefacts to fund terrorism activities and further their cause (ACAMS, 2022). Therefore, terrorism financing is considered to be the lifeblood of terrorism activities (Biswas & Sana, 2019).

Terrorism in Nigeria has been financed through cattle rustling, arms trafficking, and kidnapping for ransom, which are the most common sources of funding for terrorism and promoting activities of illicit economies, therefore causing further instability within the country (Madueke, 2023). An immediate implication is that the concentration on monitoring the financial sector to prevent terrorism financing is not adequate due to the reliance of terrorism actors on funding means outside the financial system. The terrorism financing process is in three similar stages to money laundering. However, the three stages of terrorism financing are sourcing of finances through illegitimate or legal transactions, from donations for legitimate causes; stage two is the transfer of generated funds; and finally, the third stage is utilisation for terrorism activities (Zubrzycki, 2022). Robert Agnew’s theory supports these concepts in one of the critiques of strain theories.

Robert Merton (1938) propounded the strain theory, but it was later critiqued by Robert Agnew (1992), who produced the General Strain Theory (GST). GST proposes that strains cause individuals to experience negative emotional states like anger, depression, and fear, meaning that crimes occur through criminal activity to cope with negative emotions (Carey, 2015). GST was criticised as being too broad or complex, and therefore, in response, Agnew modified the theory to identify the types of strains that result in criminal behavior (Agnew, 2001; Carey, 2015). The subjective and objective strains were introduced to specify further strains that lead to criminal behaviour (Froggio & Agnew, 2007). An objective strain would be poor grades in school, even though not all individuals find objective strains to be stressful. However, subjective strains are perceived to be more stressful by individuals who experience them and may lead to criminal behaviour (Froggio & Agnew, 2007). GST has also explained the disparities in male versus female criminal behavior (Carey, 2015).

Agnew (2010) critiqued strain-based discussions and produced the general strain theory of terrorism. It states that when people experience collective strains that are high in magnitude, affecting civilians unjustly, and caused by people in authority or complicit civilians, terrorism will most likely result. These collective strains promote terrorism in many ways but not in all instances (Agnew, 2010). This theory was also found in the works of Ljujic et al. (2017) as the theory underpinning the study and in the study of Umar (2024). Therefore, there is evidence of the usage of this theory in other studies. This paradigm was selected for this particular study because for terrorism financing to be prevented, the adopted strategies must consider stopping terrorism and its facilitators, such as injustice inflicted by influential people due to negative experiences and emotions created. The gaps in the literature were identified from the empirical review of two articles on terrorism.

Azinge 2019 examined the correlation between FATF countering terrorism financing standards compliance levels and terrorism incidents within African countries. An empirical multivariate approach was used, and results revealed that despite the compliance level to specific anti-terrorism recommendations, terrorism activities were unaffected within African countries. This implied that the recommendation targeted the banking sector without due consideration for other alternative means of financing terrorism in Africa. Consequently, African home-grown solutions were recommended to be explored to reduce terrorism and terrorism financing.

Prah & Chanimbe 2021 sought to investigate the counter-terrorism strategies employed by Ghana's security institutions to safeguard the country. A qualitative approach using thematic textual analysis of interviews with twelve security personnel was carried out, and it was found that Ghanaian institutions adopted the same strategies; however, divergencies appeared in their modus operandi. It was concluded that the counter-terrorism strategies adopted by Ghana's security services are appropriate.

These studies identified the gaps discovered due to implementing the FATF recommendations. One recommended adopting African home-grown strategies for countering terrorism financing, which this study will cover. The other article extensively covered counter-terrorism strategies deployed in Ghana without considering other African countries or developing nations. The study did not mention terrorism financing but dealt with countering terrorism generally without viewing terrorism finance from the context of this study.

3. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach from an interpretive philosophical perspective using a descriptive synthesis of strategic recommendations from research findings. These recommendations were purposefully selected from journal articles in reputable databases found in Google Scholar and relevant grey literature from reputed international organisations that specifically address developing countries from 2019 to 2024 (Hollingworth et al., 2021; Umar, 2024). These findings and recommendations were analysed, synthesised, and used to answer the research question: What are the integrated strategies to prevent terrorism financing in developing countries? To enable generalisations about the conclusions drawn from the analysis, which were underpinned by the general strain theory of terrorism, qualitative verification strategies such as saturation were utilised to ensure the study's trustworthiness and rigour.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Disrupting terrorism financing activities is a critical step in fighting terrorism and organised crime. However, it is a temporary measure and could be more effective in the long run if combined with other strategies. Therefore, a combination strategy must be adopted to prevent, detect, and respond to terrorism financing and organised crime. Table 1 presents strategies from empirical sources and grey literature to prevent terrorism financing and organised crime in developing countries.

Table 1: Strategies from empirical pieces of evidence and grey literature

S/N	Recommendations	Sources
1	Adopt an urban development strategy to cope with rising population and security vulnerabilities by building safe corridors for trade and human capital to restore economic activities.	Sampaio (2023), Nsaibia et al. (2023), Dandurand et al. (2022).
2	Community-oriented policing due to the level of confidence of locals in their vigilante or local security groups.	Sampaio (2023), Dandurand et al. (2022).
3	Execution of counter terrorism programmes such as the preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE) through restoration of victims, rehabilitation of repentant insurgents/bandits and strategic communication among stakeholders.	Umar (2024), Umar (2023).
4	Thoughtful counter-insurgency strategies more capable of dealing with the complex web of terrorism financing i.e., combining military and socio-political tools to win the heart and minds of communities.	Nsaibia et al., (2023).
5	Studying/researching and understanding funding sources, along with causes for seeking alternative funding, facilitates the development of better countering of terrorism financing measures.	Levy & Yusuf (2021), Dingji Maza et al. (2020).
6	International efforts to stop the cross-border movement of funds, effective border management and control, and reclaiming of captured territory will scuttle both external and internal sources of funding.	Umar (2023), Levy & Yusuf (2021), Bala & Tar (2021), Dingji Maza et al. (2020).
7	Potential criminal activities to be exploited must be countered to undermine the funding of terrorism.	Levy & Yusuf (2021).
8	Counter-terrorism financing efforts must adopt a proactive approach to prevent the adoption of new funding sources or methods.	Levy & Yusuf (2021).
9	Responding to violence with violence will lead to more violence, hence the need to prioritise response in these conflict areas and illicit markets. The harm created by the response must be lower than maintaining the status quo of possible terrorism financing activities.	Bish et al., (2022).
10	Actors involved in violence should be engaged to determine and understand their grievances for the issues to be resolved as a key to solving unending violence.	Bish et al., (2022).
11	A robust AML/CFT/CPF regime and compliance with Financial Action Task Force recommendations.	Umar (2023), Sultan & Mohamed (2022), Falode & Nnamani (2022), Dingji Maza et al. (2020).

12	Enforcement of legislation that prohibits the payment of ransom and government efforts to manage the victims.	Suleiman & Rabiu (2022).
13	Engaging youths in empowerment programmes for self-employment and dealing with environmental causes of these conflicts and prevention of terrorism.	Suleiman & Rabiu (2022), Prah & Chanimbe (2021), Dingji Maza et al. (2020).
14	Intelligence gathering for prevention of kidnapping for ransom, to track and monitor flow of funds for terrorism activities. Timely dissemination of actionable intelligence to proactively prevent terrorism.	Suleiman & Rabiu (2022), Falode & Nnamani (2022), Prah & Chanimbe (2021), Dingji Maza et al. (2020), Umar (2024).
15	Investigation and prosecution of sponsors of terrorism to serve as deterrence to prevent future reoccurrence.	Dingji Maza et al. (2020), Falode & Nnamani (2022).
16	Strengthening the operational, tactical and strategic capacities of relevant agencies involved in the fight against terrorism financing.	Dingji Maza et al. (2020), Prah & Chanimbe (2021).
17	Cooperation and collaboration among relevant agencies are crucial to ensure synergy in countering terrorism financing.	Madueke, (2023), Bird & Tagziria (2022), Falode & Nnamani (2022).
18	Counter terrorism related media campaign with security updates to address public fears and the need to also minimise the reporting of terrorism related news.	Prah & Chanimbe (2021).
19	The west African sub region needs political will and commitment from member states to be able to implement and enforce major decisions taken concerning countering of terrorism and there is also a need for support from the international political environment to the sub region.	Akanji (2019).
20	The need to understand the difference in organised criminal activities like money laundering and terrorism financing because the two offences have very little in common. Hence, terrorism financing is definitely not money laundering due to motivation and modus operandi.	Teichmann & Falker (2024).
21	Prioritisation of the implementation and execution of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 in developing countries.	Umar (2024).
22	Developing nations must invest in terrorism risk assessment to identify vulnerabilities and threats that will constitute opportunities for terrorism financing. The prioritisation of terrorism risks to ensure that the highest risks are mitigated.	Umar (2024).
23	African home-grown solutions to counter the financing of terrorism will be very necessary for reducing terrorism incidents in the continent due to unique modus operandi.	Azinge (2019).
24	Financial intelligence tools should be upgraded to detect terrorism financing schemes that use below the threshold transactions through financial institutions.	Gowhor (2022).
25	Create a forensic accounting commission that will conduct forensic investigations to trace terrorism financiers.	Emmanuel & Michael (2020).

26	Legislations to provide for bounty rewards and whistle blower protection to encourage all persons to report terrorism financing activities to the relevant authorities.	Chitimira & Animashaun (2023).
27	Targeting the informal sources or alternative methods used to finance terrorism activities such as buying and selling in local markets.	Adisa (2021).
28	All neighboring countries should cooperate and collaborate to check, disrupt, and dismantle terrorism financing.	Offor (2022).
29	Cutting off the existing or known terrorism funding sources is a very important way of reducing terrorism attacks.	Markovic (2021).
30	Governments should focus on solving terrorism financing issues rather than terrorist activities; without financing terrorism will stop. However, activities such as kidnapping that raises funds should be curtailed because it is a means of attacking and financing.	Osagioduwa & Okafor (2024).
31	Promote financial inclusion in any economy to discourage use of alternative or traditional finance.	Osagioduwa & Okafor (2024).

Source: Authors compilation 2024

In recent times, terrorism has become a concept that covers activities of various groups with different interests, motivations, and operations; however, there is a modus operandi of using violence to achieve these differing objectives. Therefore, it could be deduced that the strategies to be adopted to prevent terrorism financing of all kinds should be the same, especially for developing countries. The strategy should not rely on financial intelligence/financial profiling from financial and non-financial institutions alone but include other measures, policies, and physical intelligence-gathering techniques that consider the environment, organisations, and individuals to profile terrorism actors' behaviour and means of finance.

A synthesis of all the strategies shows that countering organised crime and terrorism has been entirely covered from prevention and detection to response, i.e., financial institutions and designated non-financial businesses and professions will conduct initial financial investigations before forwarding findings to the intelligence units. The financial intelligence units should monitor and raise financial intelligence concerning institutions' activities and ensure its dissemination to relevant agencies that need to respond to suspicious transactions or activities. Law enforcement agencies also need to deploy their intelligence apparatus to cover the individuals involved in these suspicious activities and profile their activities in other informal markets, alternative finance and any other informal sector of the economy for a comprehensive investigation to be conducted. Successful investigations will lead to the recovery of assets and the prosecution of offenders through the jurisdiction's legal system. These combinations will most likely ensure success in preventing, disrupting and dismantling terrorism financing in developing countries and, therefore, prevent terrorist attacks and organised criminal activity.

The general strain theory of terrorism selected for this study, along with qualitative strategies, are in alignment with the findings of the study; the adopted strategies must counter the collective strains that lead to negative experiences and emotions, such as anger that have led to terrorism in some cases in developing countries. One of the notable and comprehensive prevention strategies is the implementation of sustainable development goals that meet many basic environmental, societal, and economic needs and will reduce these collective strains.

Another strategy that will support the sustainable development goals is the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to dealing with terrorism financing and organised crime. It has since been established that no single ministry, department, or government agency can do it alone. Therefore, cooperation and collaboration are required between public and private sector institutions to prevent terrorism financing and organised crime. Finally, another critical area is the implementation of financial inclusion policies by developing countries.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper aims to provide strategies for preventing terrorism financing in developing countries using a descriptive synthesis of selected findings and recommendations from reliable databases and grey literature from reputable organisations. It was found that strategies to prevent terrorism financing of all kinds should be similar, especially in developing nations. The strategies should not rely on financial intelligence/financial profiling alone but include other measures, policies, and physical intelligence-gathering techniques that consider the environment, organisations, and individuals to profile terrorism actors' behaviour and alternative means of financing.

One limitation of this study is that counter-terrorism experts were not interviewed for more insights into what strategies they perceive to be the most effective and efficient in preventing terrorism financing. Future studies may consider using data from counter-terrorism and countering the financing of terrorism experts or comparing the strategies used in other developed countries to assess which methods are most effective and efficient for developing countries. Countering the financing of terrorism through conventional institutions and other alternative means is crucial to stopping terrorism and organised crime in developing nations.

Recommendations

Terrorism financing disruption strategies contain many tools and practices many authorities adopt to resolve terrorism and terrorism financing issues. The following activities are necessary;

i. Developing countries should conduct regular National Risk Assessments or Terrorism Financing Risk Assessments and provide stakeholders with information on terrorism financing threats, vulnerabilities, and priorities identified by the risk assessment.
ii. Produce a National Counter Financing of Terrorism Strategy to create a framework for cooperation and collaboration among relevant stakeholder agencies in both the public and private sectors.
iii. Developing countries should identify possible sources of raising, transferring, saving, and utilising funds to finance the operations of persons or groups engaged in terrorism. Other sources of revenues for terrorism actors should be identified, along with supply lines and support networks, for disruption.
iv. Disruptions should specifically target sources of revenue and stores of value, restrict access to the domestic or international financial system and alternative financial systems, and target the leadership structure, financial facilitators, and any other support network.
v. Developing nations should adopt a parallel investigations strategy to counter terrorism and terrorism financing simultaneously through cooperation and collaboration between relevant domestic and international agencies.
vi. Developing countries should implement the Financial Action Task Force's forty recommendations. However, it is pertinent to note that developing nations may need to negotiate with the FATF to vary the requirements for compliance in developing

countries. This recommendation aligns with the FATF outcome from the June 2024 Plenary in Singapore, where a risk-based approach will be implemented in the next round of mutual evaluations for developing nations.

vii. Develop stakeholders' capacity to be certified as counter-terrorist financial investigation specialists (CTFIS), conduct awareness campaigns, and develop standard operating procedures to ensure a proper understanding of each agency's operational protocols, roles, and responsibilities.

viii. Implementation of the SDGs by relevant central authorities in developing countries for ease of coordination. Considering that 2030 is the timeline for the SDGs, more efforts are required to achieve milestones within the available time. The prioritisation of the 17 goals should start by resolving environmental issues that societal and economic needs rely upon.

ix. Support the implementation of the sustainable development goals with the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to dealing with terrorism financing and organised crime.

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