

Effects of Boko-Haram's Insurgency and Violence on Women in North-Eastern Nigeria

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Abstract

It is a well known fact that Nigeria as a country is facing different problems ranging from kidnapping, armed banditry, political assassinations, human trafficking, etc. However, the most disturbing and even more dangerous problem is insurgency. Insurgency is a global phenomenon that has impacts on lives and properties. Therefore, this paper attempts to examine the impacts of Boko Haram's insurgency and violence on women in Northeastern Nigeria. Relative deprivation theory will be used to analyze the problem. The problem of insurgency is virtually affecting all sectors of Nigeria, including security, education, economy, social political development, and more importantly its violence against the women-folk in Nigeria especially in North-Eastern part of the country. The paper posits that insurgency unleashes violence against women and remains a threat to safety of lives and properties of women. The study recommends that government should be proactive in dealing with security issues and violence through modern methods of intelligence gathering, training, and use of advanced technology. The paper also recommends that the issue of insecurity in Nigeria required the joint effort of every woman by giving necessary information to the law enforcement agents.

Keywords: *Insurgency, Security, Violence, Women*

Introduction

Insurgency has become a threat to global peace and security in the 21st century due to the fact that it constitutes the highest contributor to humanitarian crisis in the form of rise in human casualties, food insecurity, etc. Insurgency is a global problem which is not just peculiar to Nigeria. Some insurgency acts include bombing, killing of innocent people, abduction of school girls and women, forced marriage and disruptions of worship centres especially in the Northeastern part of Nigeria (Blanchard, 2014).

The Boko Haram group in Nigeria started as a local peace militia in 2009 and later transformed into a violent group in 2010 when the then Governor of Borno State attacked the members of the group and killed its leaders. They came up with new tactics which include bombing, kidnapping and destruction of lives and property.

Many times women are at the receiving end of the activities of insurgents because they suffer a lot in the hands of the insurgents. Many women and girls are sexually abused, raped, forced into marriages, used as sex slaves and even taken out and sold into other

countries like Chad, Niger, Libya, etc (Phillip and Okoli, 20014).

According to the United States Government Counter Insurgency Guide (2009), insurgents always seek to subvert or displace the government and completely or partially control the resources and political power of a given country. This illustration attested to the fact that insurgents have taken over some local government areas in Borno State before and introduced caliphate system of government. Their women have suffered so much from insurgency; women were robbed, raped, kidnapped and even killed in some cases. These women are home builders and the mothers of the nation. The question is that what the government can be done to protect the lives of the citizen especially the women?. How does the act of rape and violation affect women?. All these are the questions that required an urgent solution.

Theoretical Analysis on Violence Against Women

Therefore different theories have been propounded to explain crime in the society, for the purpose of this paper, relative deprivation theory will be used to explain insurgency in the Nigeria society.

Relative deprivation theory was propounded by Samuel A. Stouffer (1900 –

1960) who was a great sociologist. *He first wrote relative deprivation theory in his book.*

The argument of the theory is that feelings of relative deprivation arise when desires become legitimate expectations and are blocked by the society. The central idea of relative deprivation theory suggests that individuals or groups feel deprived when their circumstances and legitimate expectations are blocked by the society. It describes feelings or measures of economic, political or social deprivation. Relative deprivation is linked to partly poverty and social exclusion (Flynn, 2011). Martin (2006) argues that the deprived group employs the use of the violence as the only means to achieve their motive of being relatively deprived. Deprivation leads to anger, frustration and violence will be resulted to.

Boko Haram insurgents are said to be deprived of some certain rights such as employment, education and other opportunities that expose them to many social problems, as such they employ insurgency to address the problem. North Eastern Nigeria where Boko Haram insurgents operate has the highest prevalence rate of poverty of 59.7% compared to other geo-political zones in Nigeria. However, the poverty rate of other zones in Nigeria which include Southwest, North central etc. are relatively low mainly due

to agricultural practices that provides food and raw materials for the industrial development.

Conceptual Classification: Insurgency and Violence Against Women

Insurgency is an emotional issues and people differ on questions of conceptual definition and also disagree on interpretation of fact in specific cases of insurgency activity. Noam (1991) and Webster (2006) define insurgency as a violent attempt to take the control of a government in an illegal manner. Also, United States Department of Defence (2009) defined insurgency as the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat or unlawful violence to inculcate fear, intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuits of goals that are generally political, religious or ideological. The American Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (1999) defines insurgency as the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population.

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2015) defines violence against women as physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to the women including which may be inform of coercion or arbitrary deprivation of one's liberty.

Bouta (2005) defines violence against women as a crime against women folk's in the society and country at large.

Brief History of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria

According to Muritala (2013), the official name of Boko Haram is "Jama'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid – Da'awah Wal Jihad" (Congregation of the people of traditional for Jihad) which means western education is sinful. The group emerged as a small Sunni Islamic group advocating for the establishment of an Islamic state and a strict interpretation and implementation of Islamic law in Nigeria. They emerged as a local Islamic movement mainly for preaching and engaging in charity activities to people in Maiduguri, Borno State. The activities changed when the Nigerian government launched an investigation into their activities following reports that its members were arming themselves. The long standing issues of religious violence between Nigeria's Muslim and the Christian communities in the country was the starting point of conflict (Cook, 2011). The group's founder and leader, Mohammed Yusuf was killed while still in police custody in 2011.

In March 2015, Boko Haram leader, Shekau, tried to improve his international standing among Jihadists by tactically aligning

with the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL). This made the Boko Haram group to become the Islamic State's of West African Province (ISWAP), and Shekau was appointed as its first Khalif (Governor). After some years of fighting, Boko Haram become increasingly aggressive and began to seize large areas in the Northeastern part of Nigeria mainly Borno, Yobe, Zamfara states etc. The violence escalated dramatically in 2014 till date.

Boko Haram Insurgency and Violence Against Women

In Nigeria, especially, in the North-East geo-political zone, where the presence of Boko Haram is reducing now, terrorist's activities had contributed greatly to violence against women. People live in fear and anxiety; women are always the victims of attacks, abduction and sexual violence. Zenn and Pearson (2014) are of the opinion that women based violence transcends region, religion and ethnicity in Nigeria with physical and sexual abuse affecting many women. Rights and privileges of women have been abused and there are many factors that cause these different forms of violence. Societies developed some structures which allow the use of violence on an individual level; these structures are deeply gendered. Gender identifies can contribute to the motivations that

led to the perpetration of violence against women. Violence against women is exercised by different actors and in different ways. The terrorists group brings hardship and suffering to the women in Nigeria especially in the Northeastern part of the country, Plaza (2017).

The activities of insurgents have led to the loss of thousands of lives and even property. Women are always raped, some lost part of their body, while others suffer from sickness like hypertension, heart problems, fear and trauma.

Many factors are responsible for the various violence perpetrated against women by Boko Haram. One of these is their emphasis on forced imposition of sharia through rigid gendered ideological structured. Shaira ideology is one of the possible factors in which women based violence relied on. Also, Nigeria culture generally Africa do not attached serious importance to the female gender and the women are not seen as an asset and where exploited as such. Gendered norms have been adopted by Boko Haram's leaders and oppose the rights and privileges of women that are associated with western ideas. There is abduction of secondary school girls in the Northeastern part of Nigeria which include that of Chibok, Dapachi, etc and some of them are still in the captivity of the insurgents. Furthermore, following the different

abductions, insurgents began to use women as a female suicide bombers, (Philip and Okoli 2014).

Implications of Insurgency on Women in Nigeria

There are many implications of this acts of violence on women. One of it is psychological trauma. Women suffer various degrees of psychological trauma in the hands of insurgents. The trauma a woman goes through because of rape, is one of the factors that pushes a woman to be involved in violent acts. Bloom (2007), explains that in some instances women are sexually abused by the insurgents. Since the abuse tends to stigmatize women, many commit suicide.

Another important implication has to do with the health of women. Haider (2015), maintains that women health is suffered greatly through the trauma they passed through which could be direct or indirect. The direct impact is related to death while the indirect impact includes the risk of disease transmission like HIV/AIDs and several transmitted diseases. Women can be stigmatized for bearing HIV positive children who are fathered by the insurgents. Also, violence reduces women's life expectancy disproportionate to men's because women are more affected by the indirect effects of

economic changes. Terrorist organizations have targeted women for recruitment but terrorism is misconceived to be a male issue. Nevertheless, the proportion of women involved in terrorist groups is still small in comparison to men (Plaza, 2017).

The insurgents had caused the military forces a lot, in term of human resources. Their base had been attacked leading to the destruction of lives, properties and ammunition. Many soldiers were killed on the 17th of June, 2019 when the troops were attacked by Borno (Olaleye, 2019). Also on the 23rd February, 2020, the insurgents attacked and killed many soldiers in Adamawa.

Conclusion

The academic discourse of insurgency clearly reveals that Nigeria is confronted with developmental issues and security challenges. This is manifest in Boko Haram murderous activities against women, school girls, security forces, government establishments etc. The increase in violence, killings, attacks, suicide bombings, sexual abuse, kidnapping, etc make the government to take proactive measures against insurgents. Women in Nigeria especially in the North Eastern part of country suffer a lot of psychological trauma in the hands of insurgents with many sexually abused, raped, forced into marriages, forced to

commit suicide bombing while some were killed. These acts are great violence against women and a crime against the women folk in Nigeria, (Ningi, 2017).

Suggestions for the Study

Therefore, the following points are suggested as possible solutions to end or ameliorate this problem in Nigeria:-

- Adequate security education should be provided for the citizens especially women, so that they will not fall victims of attack, rape and violence in the hands of the insurgents.
- The armed forces in Nigeria must be well equipped with modern weapons in

order to protect women-folk in Northeastern Nigeria.

- The fight against insurgency should be everybody's business. Every women should join hands together in the fight by devoting more time to pray to God to intervene and to come to the nation's aid.
- The government should declare total war on insurgency and seek support from international communities who had faced these kind of problems in the past and were able to tackle them.

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