



A BRIEF EXPOSITION OF ABUSES OF THE HUMAN PERSON IN THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

This article seeks to expose the abuses to the human person in the Nigerian society, many of which go unnoticed or even appear to be accepted social behaviour. It aims at addressing various kinds of abuses to human life and dignity in Nigeria, with a view to proposing solutions to these abuses. The work begins with an introduction and then defines some important terms. It goes on to expose different kinds abuses prevalent in the Nigerian society such as child abuse, gender-based violence, assaults on the human person, human trafficking and religious persecution. Having discussed these affronts to the human person in details, it then proposes such lines of action as enlightenment, employment, improved security, enforcement of child protection laws, religious tolerance, gender equality and the training of security agents as possible solutions to this malaise. It is hoped that these recommendations, when properly implemented, will help in the reduction of cases of human abuse within the Nigerian society. It is further hoped that this article will provoke deeper scholarly endeavor into the subject matter.

Keywords: Human Abuse, Human Dignity, Human Person, Nigerian Society.

Introduction

Human dignity enshrined in Nigeria encompasses the recognition and respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens, regardless of ethnicity, religion, or socio-economic status. However; Nigeria as a country has faced a lot of issues with regard to the abuse of human dignity and life. This has become turbulent crisis Nigeria undergoes such as high level of insecurity, occasioned by menace armed robbery, kidnapping, religious conflict of interest, tribal ethnicity, Fulani's herdsman-farmers clash and *Boko Haram* terrorist group. All this hazardous action is against human dignity, that spring from the nature of being human is been stripped away.⁷¹ A country where the poor find it difficult to breathe, children hawk on the streets, the youths roam about hungry with nothing to eat, workers are underpaid and politicians move about with filled bellies is a country in shambles. Some may dare to say that 'shambles' is an understatement to describe the present condition of Nigeria. The dignity of the human person has been reduced to almost nothing and the sad part is that the citizens are forced to have adapted to the new status due to the hardship that surrounds them. Human dignity suggests human beings have inherent worth

⁷¹ Antonio Rosmini, *The Philosophy of Right: Universal Social Right*, (Tran. By Denis Cleary and Terence Watson), (Vol. 3, Printed by Bell & Bain Limited), P.21



and respect simply because they are human. Article one of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,⁷² states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. This work will be an exploration of various human abuses that are practiced in Nigeria and how they soil the respect, right and dignity of the human person.

1. Clarification of Terms

a. Human Dignity

The English expression ‘human dignity’ consists of the predicate ‘human’ and the noun ‘dignity’. The adjective qualifies the noun, thus determining the kind of dignity in question as the human kind. ‘Human’ is etymologically related to the Latin for earth, humus, so that ‘human’ means the species of rational animals, referring in particular to their kindness (humanity) and their fallibility (‘all too human’). ‘Dignity’ comes from the Latin noun *decus*, meaning ornament, distinction, honour, glory. dignity means, generally speaking, the standing of one entitled to respect, that is, his or her status, and it refers to that which in a being (in particular a personal being) induces or ought to induce such respect: its excellence or incomparability of value.⁷³ When ‘human’ and ‘dignity’ are used in conjunction they form the expression ‘human dignity’, which means the status of human beings entitling them to respect, a status which is first and to be taken for granted. It refers to their highest value, or to the fact that they are a presupposition for value, as they are those to whom value makes sense.

b. Human Abuse

Human abuse is a pervasive and multifaceted issue that encompasses a wide range of behaviors and actions, including physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse, as well as neglect and exploitation. It is a violation of an individual's fundamental human rights and can have lasting and devastating effects on a person's physical and mental well-being. In Nigeria, human abuse is a pressing concern that affects people of all ages, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds.⁷⁴ In Nigeria, human abuse is a complex and widespread problem that affects millions of people each year. The most common forms of abuse in Nigeria include physical violence, sexual assault, emotional and psychological abuse, child abuse, and elder abuse. These forms of abuse can occur in a variety of settings, including the home, schools, workplaces, and communities, and are often perpetuated by family members, intimate partners, caregivers, and authority figures. One of the most prevalent forms of abuse in Nigeria is physical violence, which includes acts of domestic violence, assault, and corporal punishment.⁷⁵

2. Types of Human Abuses in Nigeria

3.1 Child Abuse

⁷²Universal Declaration of Human Rights, (United Nations, 1948), retrieved from <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights#:~:text=Article%201,in%20a%20spirit%20of%20brotherhood>

⁷³A former version of this article was printed in Vial Correa and Sgreccia (eds.): *La cultura della vita: Fondamenti e dimensioni*, Supplemento al volume degli Atti della VII Assemblea Generale 1-4 marzo 2001 (Città de Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002) pp. 87-101, under the title: ‘Towards a Definition of Human Dignity’.

⁷⁴ Onwu, N. (1992) Human right, and social justice: An Introduction in J. Okuoro Utome (Ed.) *African Humanities* (Pp. 76-90) Awka: Meshiink Publishers, 82

⁷⁵ Iwe, N.N.S. (1986). *The History and contents of Human Rights* New York: Peter Lang, 60



Child abuse is the physical, sexual or emotional mistreatment of a child that causes long term or permanent damage. Child abuse is a problem, yet nobody seems to care that much in Nigeria. This is likely due to efforts being directed at solving the more widespread problems of childhood, such as hunger and illness.⁷⁶

a. Child Labour

Child labor can be defined as work performed by a minor that is prohibited by statute law, particularly under terms and conditions considered inhumane. Child labor deprives children of their right to education and is harmful to their physical, moral and mental development. The concern is with children who are denied their childhood and future, who work at too young an age, who work long hours for low wages, who work under conditions harmful to their health and to their physical and mental development, who are separated from their families, and who are deprived of education.

b. Child Neglect

It is a form of child abuse caused by the denial of basic needs like proper nutrition, care, and love. The most common way we identify child neglect is through the child and parent's condition and behavior.⁷⁷ However, some behaviors may have possible explanations other than child neglect, such as a child who runs away or engages in delinquent behavior.⁷⁸ Victims of child neglect are often exposed and vulnerable to a lot of exploitation. An example of this is seen in the children who roam the streets in Northern Nigeria popularly called *Almajiri*.

c. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is defined as physical injury inflicted on a child by other than accidental means. Physical injury is anything that results in severe or frequent bruising to more serious injuries. This can come in the form of beating, bullying or even extreme disciplinary actions.

3.2 Gender Based Violence

a. Rape

Rape is an unlawful sexual intercourse or any other sexual penetration of the vagina, anus, or mouth of another person, with or without force, by a sex organ, other body part, or foreign object, without the consent of the person subjected to such penetration. In many jurisdictions, the crime of rape has been subsumed under that of sexual assault. Rape was long considered to be caused by unbridled sexual desire, but it is now understood as a pathological assertion of power over a victim.⁷⁹ Hence, in many rape trials, the guilt or innocence of the accused hinges on whether or not the victim consented to sexual intercourse. The determination of consent often can lead to

⁷⁶ <https://www.eajournals.org/> Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development -UK Children's Bureau. (2011). Child maltreatment 2011, 1–251. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cm1>, 28

⁷⁷ Ebigbo, P.O. (1993). *Situation Analysis of Child Abuse and Neglect in Nigeria*, 160

⁷⁸ Barker, N. (Ed). *Child Abuse and Neglect. An Interdisciplinary Method of Treatment*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1989.

⁷⁹ Richard Ramirez "Human Sexual activity" (Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica), accessed 2024



distressing cross examinations of rape victims in court. As a result, many rape victims choose not to report the crime to police or refuse to press charges against their assailants.

b. Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The practice has no health benefits for girls and women and cause severe bleeding and problems urinating, and later cysts, infections, as well as complications in childbirth and increased risk of newborn deaths. The practice of FGM is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women. It reflects deep-rooted inequality between the sexes and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against girls and women.⁸⁰

c. Forced Marriages

A forced marriage is where one or both people do not or cannot consent to the Marriage and pressure or abuse is used to force them into the marriage. It is also when anything is done to make someone marry before they achieve the legal age of marriage, even if there is no pressure or abuse. Forced marriage is illegal in the Nigeria. It is a form of domestic abuse and a serious Abuse of human rights.

d. Domestic Violence

Domestic violence has many names: wife abuse, marital assault, woman battery, spouse abuse, wife beating, conjugal violence, intimate violence, battering, partner abuse, for example. Sometimes these terms are used interchangeably to refer to the problem, while at other times a particular term is used to reflect a specific meaning (e.g., “woman abuse” to highlight the fact that most victims are women).⁸¹ By definition, domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors, including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion, that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners.⁸²

Domestic violence is not an isolated, individual event, but rather a pattern of perpetrator behaviors used against a victim. The pattern consists of a variety of abusive acts, occurring in multiple episodes over the course of the relationship. Some episodes consist of a sustained attack with one tactic repeated many times (e.g., punching), combined with a variety of other tactics (such as name calling, threats, or attacks against property). Other episodes consist of a single act (e.g., a slap, a “certain look”). One tactic (e.g., physical assault) may be used infrequently, while other types of abuse (such as name calling or intimidating gestures) may be used daily. Battering episodes last a few minutes to several hours or days. While some perpetrators repeat a particular set of abusive acts, other perpetrators use a wide variety of tactics with no particular routine.⁸³

3. Assaults on the Human Person

a. Physical Assaults

⁸⁰KyokoNakamura, KaoriMiyachi, Yukio Miyawaki, &MakikoToda “*Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting*” (Springer Singapore Publishers, 2023). 127

⁸¹ Anne L. Ganley, Understanding Domestic Violence, Health Resource Manual, 16, retrieved from https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/HealthCare/improving_healthcare_manual_1.pdf

⁸² Ibid, 16.

⁸³ Ibid., 18.



Physical abuse may include spitting, scratching, biting, grabbing, shaking, shoving, pushing, restraining, throwing, twisting, slapping (with open or closed hand), punching, choking, burning, and/or use of weapons (e.g., household objects, knives, guns) against the victim. The physical assaults may or may not cause injuries. Sometimes a seemingly less serious type of physical abuse, such as a shove or push, can result in the most serious injury. The perpetrator may push the victim against a couch, a wall, down a flight of stairs, or out of a moving car, all of which could result in varying degrees of trauma (e.g., bruising, broken bones, spinal cord injuries). Sometimes the physical abuse does not cause a specific injury but does cause other health problems. For example, one perpetrator frequently abused his partner during meals and late at night. He would push, restrain, and spit at his partner as well as abuse her verbally.⁸⁴

b. Sexual Assaults

Some perpetrators sexually batter their victims. Sexual battering consists of a wide range of conduct that may include pressured sex when the victim does not want sex, coerced sex by manipulation or threat, physically forced sex, or sexual assault accompanied by violence. Victims may be coerced or forced to perform a kind of sex they do not want (e.g., sex with third parties, physically painful sex, sexual activity they find offensive, verbal degradation during sex, viewing sexually violent material) or at a time they do not want it (e.g., when exhausted, when ill, in front of children, after a physical assault, when asleep). Some perpetrators attack their victims' genitals with blows or weapons. Some perpetrators deny victims contraception or protection against sexually transmitted diseases. The perpetrators' message to the victims is that they have no say over their own bodies. Sometimes victims will resist and are then punished, and sometimes they comply in hopes that the sexual abuse will end quickly.⁸⁵ For some battered victims this sexual violation is profound and may be difficult to discuss. Some victims are unsure whether this sexual behavior is really abuse, while others see it as the ultimate betrayal.

c. Psychological Assaults

There are different types of psychological assaults: threats of violence and harm, emotional abuse and isolation.

i. Threats of Violence and Harm

The perpetrator's threats of violence or harm may be directed against the victim or others important to the victim or they may be suicide threats. Sometimes the threat includes killing the victim and others and then committing suicide. The threats may be made directly with words (e.g., "I'm going to kill you," "No one is going to have you," "Your mother is going to pay," "I cannot live without you") or with actions (e.g., stalking, displaying weapons, hostage taking, suicide attempts). Perpetrators may be violent towards others (e.g., neighbors, family members) as a means of terrorizing victims.⁸⁶

ii. Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is a tactic of control that consists of a wide variety of verbal attacks and humiliations, including repeated verbal attacks against the victim's worth as an individual or role

⁸⁴ Ibid., 19.

⁸⁵ Understanding Domestic Violence, 19.

⁸⁶ Ibid.



as a parent, family member, friend, co-worker, or community member. The verbal attacks often emphasize the victim's vulnerabilities (such as her past history as an incest victim, language abilities, skills as a parent, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, or HIV status).⁸⁷

iii. Isolation

Perpetrators often try to control victims' time, activities and contact with others. They gain control over them through a combination of isolating and disinformation tactics. Isolating tactics may become more overtly abusive over time. At first perpetrators cut victims off from supportive relationships by claims of loving them "so much" and wanting to be with them all the time. In response to these statements, victims may initially spend increasing amounts of time with their perpetrators. These subtle means of isolating the victim are then replaced with more overt verbal abuse (e.g., complaints about "interfering" family, complaints about her spending too much time with others); sometimes the perpetrator uses physical assaults or threats of assault to separate the victim from her family or friends.⁸⁸

4. Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a complex and organized criminal activity that involves the exploitation of individuals for various purposes, such as forced labor, sexual exploitation, and involuntary servitude. It can affect men, women, and children of all ages and occurs in countries all around the world. The process of human trafficking usually begins with recruitment, where individuals are lured or deceived with false promises of employment, education, or a better life. Common tactics used by traffickers include fraud, manipulation, and coercion. Victims may be recruited from vulnerable populations, such as impoverished communities, displaced individuals, or those seeking opportunities in unfamiliar or unstable environments.⁸⁹ Once recruited, victims are often transported across borders or within a country. This is achieved through various means, including the use of fraudulent documents, smuggling routes, or the assistance of corrupt officials. During this stage, victims may be subjected to physical and emotional abuse, threats, or violence to maintain control and prevent escape.

The factors contributing to human trafficking are complex and interconnected. Poverty, lack of education, unemployment, political instability, and gender inequality are all significant factors that create vulnerable situations for potential victims. Weak legal frameworks, corruption, and insufficient law enforcement efforts also contribute to the persistence of this crime.⁹⁰ Trafficking in Persons (TIP), whether domestically or internationally is developed to a high degree of complexity and multidimensionality, in spite of being regarded as an illegal activity; is surprisingly omnipresent globally.⁹¹ The actual branding of victims by their traffickers has also been recorded. Human trafficking is not an obsolete practice, and these crimes are not rare in occurrence. Recent examples of human trafficking such as the abduction of hundreds of Nigerian schoolgirls by the

⁸⁷ Ibid., 20.

⁸⁸ Understanding Domestic Violence, 20.

⁸⁹ M. A. Robertson, *human right in national and international law* (Manchester: Manchester university press, 1968), 12-13.

⁹⁰ J. E. S. Fawcett, *the protection of human on universal basis* (Boston: Nijhoff publishers, 1968), 17.

⁹¹ Hempbun & Simon "Human Trafficking Issues in Asian Countries: A Discussion to overcome." (Kakar Publishers, 2017). 2



terrorist organization Boko Haram and depictions of trafficking in films such as Taken have brought human trafficking squarely into the public eye. This offers a comprehensive understanding of human trafficking in its many forms which keeps occurring in our world today

5.1 Types of Human Trafficking

- a. **Sex trafficking:** This involves the recruitment, transportation, or harboring of individuals for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Victims are forced into prostitution, pornography, or other forms of sexual exploitation against their will.
- b. **Labor trafficking:** This refers to the recruitment, transportation, or harboring of individuals for forced labor or involuntary servitude. Victims are exploited in industries such as agriculture, construction, manufacturing, domestic work, or sweatshops.
- c. **Child trafficking:** Children are particularly vulnerable to trafficking due to their age and dependency. They may be trafficked for various purposes, including sexual exploitation, forced labor, child soldiering, or as child brides.
- d. **Organ trafficking:** This involves the illegal trade of organs, where individuals are coerced or deceived into giving up their organs for transplantation. Organ trafficking often targets vulnerable individuals who are desperate for money or in need of medical treatment.
- e. **Child soldiering:** Children are recruited or abducted and forced to participate in armed conflicts as soldiers. They are subjected to violence, exploitation, and psychological manipulation.

It is important to note that these types of trafficking are not mutually exclusive, and victims may experience multiple forms of exploitation simultaneously.⁹²

5. Violations of Religious Freedom

The concept of religious freedom is central to the Nigerian political system. Religious freedom, which is both an individual and a collective right, exists side by side with other fundamental freedoms like freedom of expression and freedom of association and assembly. While these fundamental freedoms are constitutionally protected, the religious freedom conditions in the country have deteriorated over the years and are characterized by both state and societally perpetrated violations.

a. Imposition of Sharia Law, Sharia Criminal Courts and Sharia Customary Courts

Sharia Law, a product of Islam, has been imposed on the majority of the states in Northern Nigeria, an area with a significant non-Muslim population. The inclusion of the Sharia Law in the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria was viewed by Christians as a subtle move by the government to Islamize Nigeria, an allegation that does not seem to have faded. State enforcement of religious laws presents serious challenges to the religious freedom of the large non-Muslim

⁹²R. Schifer, Forty Years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, (New York: Bulletin of Human Rights, 1988), 92.



population in these Northern states and exposes them to all forms of persecution and inhumane treatments.⁹³

b. Blasphemy Laws

Nigeria has laws against blasphemy adjudicated by Customary Courts, as well as Islamic laws against blasphemy adjudicated by Sharia Courts in most of the Northern Muslim States. The prohibition against blasphemy in the Criminal Code (which is recognized under Sharia Law) is a violation of human rights and fundamental religious freedoms. Section 204 of the Criminal Code prohibits acts that publicly insult any religion and offenses attract a prison sentence of up to two years. However, Sharia Courts are exclusively concerned with acts directly involving insults to Islam and the penalty is death. Many Christians have been accused of blasphemy and killed by Muslims in Nigeria. The most recent being the case of a young girl Deborah Samuel Yakubu, a student of the Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto, who was accused of blasphemy and killed and burnt by fellow students (Ewang, 2022). This incident will occurred on May 12, 2022, sparked global outrage and revealed how deep religious extremism was in Nigeria. Even more regrettable is the fact that nobody has been prosecuted for this heinous crime.

c. Discrimination Against Religious Minorities

Muslims living in Christian dominated areas, Christians living in Muslim dominated areas, and adherents of indigenous religions living in Muslim or Christian dominated areas are considered religious minorities. There exists subtle, but systematic, deprivation of access to healthcare, loans, housing, education or employment on the basis of religious affiliation. This threatens peaceful co-existence as people are forced to relocate to where their religion is in the majority in order to have access to these basic amenities. Given that most of these services are provided by the state, these discriminatory practices are carried out in and by government institutions directly or indirectly.⁹⁴

d. Religious Persecution

Closely related to the discrimination against religious minorities is the issue of religious persecution. The failure of the government to provide protection for religious minorities exposes them to all kinds of persecution. Christians in Northern Nigeria, especially, experience severe hostility and threats to life and livelihood on a consistent basis. Christians pay a huge price for their faith as they are often beaten, tortured, confined, isolated, raped, imprisoned, enslaved and even killed.

e. Targeted Abduction and Kidnapping of Individuals

Terrorism, radicalization and violent extremism by groups with underlying religious agendas have made the country a haven for criminal activities like kidnappings, abductions, raiding of

⁹³ Williams, Dodeye Uduak. "State and Non-State Violations of Religious Freedom and Implications for National Unity in Nigeria." Canopy Forum, August 5, 2022. <https://canopyforum.org/2022/08/05/state-and-non-state-violations-of-religious-freedom-and-implication-for-national-unity-in-nigeria>

⁹⁴ Williams, Dodeye Uduak. "State and Non-State Violations of Religious Freedom and Implications for National Unity in Nigeria." Canopy Forum, August 5, 2022. <https://canopyforum.org/2022/08/05/state-and-non-state-violations-of-religious-freedom-and-implication-for-national-unity-in-nigeria>



communities and even killings, with government forces offering very little (or no) protection to civilian communities. Groups like Boko Haram, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), ‘Unknown Gunmen,’ bandits, cattle herders and all kinds of armed groups take advantage of the religious climate. The Office of International Religious Freedom in 2021 reported several cases of Muslim men kidnapping young Christian girls and forcing them into marriage and conversion to Islam.

f. Arbitrary Execution of Individuals by Armed Groups

The arbitrary execution of individuals on religious grounds has become very common in Nigeria. In December 2019, the British Broadcasting Network (BBC) reported that the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP) released a video claiming to have beheaded eleven Christians. The Office of International Religious Freedom released a report this year detailing cases of executions. Some of these instances include: August 2021, Christian youths killed twenty-seven Muslims on a bus in Plateau State, Nigeria; September 2021, Muslim cattle herders killed at least forty-nine people, mostly Christians and abducted twenty-seven in several attacks on communities in the religiously mixed Southern Kaduna state, Nigeria; January, 2021 suspected Fulani Herdsmen kidnapped and killed Reverend John GbaakanYaji, a Catholic Priest of the Minna Diocese. These executions are commonplace in Nigeria today, and the perpetrators are rarely apprehended or punished.

g. Extrajudicial Killings on Religious Grounds

In May 2022, student Deborah Yakubu was murdered by her colleagues on the grounds of blaspheming the Prophet Mohammed and Islam. Her colleagues beat her repeatedly with stones and clubs before finally setting her on fire while shouting “Allahu Akbar” (God is Great) as she lay lifeless on the ground. In 2007, a school teacher in one of the local communities in Gombe State was beaten and stabbed to death after being falsely accused by one of her students of tearing a copy of the Quran. These are just a few examples of extrajudicial killings carried out on religious grounds and more often than not the perpetrators are not penalized by the law; even if they are arrested, they are released with no charges.⁹⁵

h. Attacks on Religious Gatherings and Places of Worship (Churches or Mosques)/

Attacks on houses of worship are very common in Nigeria today. In October 2021, gunmen killed at least eighteen worshippers and abducted eleven during early morning prayers at a mosque in a local community in Niger State. Just last month, in a community in Ondo State, South Western Nigeria, gunmen brutally murdered about forty worshippers, including children, at a Catholic Church during a service. The gunmen attacked the church, opened fire on the unarmed worshippers and left the premises without being apprehended by security forces. In June 2022 [Reuters](https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/nigeria-gunmen-kill-eight-kidnap-about-thirty-eight-others-attack-two-2022-06-02/) reported that gunmen killed eight people and kidnapped about thirty-eight others in an attack on two

⁹⁵ Williams, Dodeye Uduak. “State and Non-State Violations of Religious Freedom and Implications for National Unity in Nigeria.” Canopy Forum, August 5, 2022. <https://canopyforum.org/2022/08/05/state-and-non-state-violations-of-religious-freedom-and-implication-for-national-unity-in-nigeria>



churches in Kaduna State, Nigeria. Again, these attacks are fairly common and are followed by heavy media publicity with little or no arrests made at the end of the day.

6. Special Focus on Violence in North-East Nigeria

The North East region of Nigeria has been plagued by violence for several years, resulting in a humanitarian crisis with devastating consequences for the population of the region, the loss of thousands of lives, the displacement of millions of people, and the destruction of infrastructure and livelihoods. This violence is primarily associated with the *Boko Haram* insurgency, which emerged in the early 2000s and has since been responsible for numerous attacks, abductions, and the displacement of millions of people.⁹⁶ The violence in North Eastern Nigeria is largely rooted in socio-economic and political factors. The region suffers from high levels of poverty, unemployment, and inequality, which have created a fertile ground for radicalization and recruitment by extremist groups. Additionally, a history of marginalization and perceived neglect by the Nigerian government has fueled grievances among the population in the region, further exacerbating the violence.

The consequences of the violence in North Eastern Nigeria are severe and wide-ranging. The loss of lives has been staggering, with estimates suggesting that tens of thousands of people have been killed as a result of the conflict.⁹⁷ The violence has also resulted in the displacement of over two million people, many of whom have sought refuge in overcrowded camps with limited access to basic necessities.⁹⁸ Moreover, the destruction of infrastructure and disruption of economic activities have led to widespread poverty and food insecurity in the region.⁹⁹ Efforts to address the violence in North Eastern Nigeria have been complex and challenging. The Nigerian government has deployed military forces and initiated various counterinsurgency operations in an attempt to combat *Boko Haram*. However, these measures have been criticized for their heavy-handedness and human rights abuses.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, efforts to address the root causes of the violence, such as poverty and marginalization, have been limited and largely ineffective.

To address the violence in North Eastern Nigeria, a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach is required. This should include a focus on addressing the underlying socio-economic factors through initiatives aimed at reducing poverty, promoting education, and creating opportunities for employment. Additionally, efforts should be made to improve governance and ensure better leadership in the region, as well as promote dialogue and reconciliation among different ethnic and religious groups.¹⁰¹ Addressing violence requires a multi-faceted approach

⁹⁶Adams, V., Patterson, D. A., & Braga, A. A. (2016). *The effect of gun shows on gun-related deaths: Evidence from California and Texas*. Journal of Urban Economics, 88, 67-76.

⁹⁷Ishaya, T. J., Tella, F. A., & Kajang, D. A. (2021). *Socioeconomic variables and Boko Haram insurgency: Empirical evidence from Nigeria*. Asian Social Science, 17(1), 208-218.

⁹⁸Okoli, F. C., Usman, U. Y., Okalebo, R., & Etim, V. E. (2018). *Impact of Boko Haram insurgency on the socioeconomic development in Nigeria*. Journal of African Studies and Development, 10(4), 40-47.

⁹⁹Omar, N. T., & Alhaji, M. A. (2016). *Impacts of Boko Haram insurgency on socio-economic activities of rural dwellers in Borno State*. Journal of Geography, Environment and Earth Science International, 5(3), 1-10.

¹⁰⁰Pinaud, B. (2019). *Violence in Nigeria: Breaking the chain*. Africa Policy Journal, 15(1), 62-77.

¹⁰¹Uzochukwu, C. O., Nwachukwu, N. K., & Eskay, M. (2020). *Addressing the underlining causes of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria*. Defense and Peace Economics, 31(8), 962-982.



that involves various stakeholders. Firstly, there is a need for comprehensive legal reforms to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable for their actions. This includes strengthening violence laws and establishing specialized courts to handle these cases. Secondly, community-based interventions that focus on changing cultural norms and attitudes towards violence against citizens are crucial.¹⁰² This can be achieved through awareness campaigns, education programs, and the involvement of religious and community leaders. Additionally, providing safe spaces, support services, and counseling for survivors of violence is essential for their recovery and empowerment.

Violence is a pervasive problem in North Eastern Nigeria, influenced by factors such as poverty, and cultural norms. It has devastating consequences for individuals, families, and society at large. To address this issue effectively, it is essential to implement comprehensive legal reforms, community-based interventions, and support services for survivors. By addressing the root causes of violence and promoting peace, North Eastern Nigeria can work towards a future free from violence. The violence in North Eastern Nigeria is a complex issue that has had devastating consequences for the region. Poverty, marginalization, and political grievances have played a significant role in fueling the violence. Efforts to address the violence should focus on both the immediate security concerns and the underlying socio-economic factors. It is only through a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach that lasting peace and stability can be achieved in the region.

7. Lines of Action

- a. **Enlightenment:** Enlightenment is the first step towards the prevention of human abuses. This is because many people do not even now what constitutes abuse. Some people are victims of abuse and see at as a norm, only to bear the psychological effects later in life. People must therefore be enlightened to avoid being victims or perpetrators of any form of abuse.
- b. **Enforcement of child protection laws:** Due to the vulnerability of children, who most often are the victims of abuse, the must be a strict enforcement of child protection laws. Most perpetrators of child abuse do it because they believe they can get away with it since children are limited in verbal expression. However, confirmed abusers of children should be made to face the full wrath of the law to serve as a deterrent to others.
- c. **Employment:** A lot of victims of sex trafficking gave up themselves voluntarily in a bid to find means of survival. Many victims do even know the extent of abuse they shall undergo in the process. If people were more gainfully employed, a lot of young women would not embrace a life of prostitution as a means of survival.
- d. **Security against trafficking:** There must be stringent efforts towards the elimination of sex trafficking. Security agents must be on the alert to deter such heinous acts and individuals found to encourage or promote such acts should be held accountable.
- e. **Religious tolerance:** No religion has the monopoly of violence and nobody has the right to victimize another on religious grounds. People must learn to tolerate, if not celebrate, religious differences. Anyone found guilty of persecuting another for religious reasons should face the law. Nigeria is a secular state and this should be upheld.

¹⁰²Ibid



- f. **Gender equality:** The rights and dignity of women should be upheld at all times. No woman should be oppressed due to her physical vulnerability. Laws that protect our women should be clear and enforced. This is because damaged women raise damaged children. To avoid a society filled with juvenile delinquents, our women must be protected.
- g. **Training of security agents:** A lot of abuses in Nigeria are carried out by those charged with the protection of Nigerian citizens, that is, security agents. Cases of unjust killings by trigger-happy policemen and unnecessary intimidation of Nigerians by security agents abound. The result is that the average Nigerian is apprehensive when they come across security agents. Security agents need to undergo training on how to relate with civilians and any agent found guilty of abusing power should face dismissal and prosecution.

8. Conclusion

The violation of human rights in Nigeria is widespread to the point that the right to dignity is fast becoming elusive. People are maltreated without any regard to their human dignity by security agencies especially when they protest or speak against the government. Similarly, the citizens themselves also abuse the rights of their fellow citizens. For instance, it is not unusual for an average Nigerian to mobilize the police or thugs against his fellow citizen following a simple commercial disagreement.¹⁰³ The issue extends also to the workplace. The dignity of labour is fast becoming a mirage as casual workers (such as cleaners, gate keepers, etc) are often not accorded the respect that they deserve as humans. Unless both the citizens and leaders begin to value the dignity of human life, we will continue to be in a state of retrogression.

Over the years, successive regimes in Nigeria have included in their political manifestoes the crucial issues of the protection and respect for human dignity and improved standard of living for its populace. This shows that they understand the importance of upholding the dignity of the human person. However, despite these numerous campaigns, promises and the provisions of the Constitution, vagrant disrespect for human dignity and value for human lives continues to increase not just by government agencies charged with the sole duty to protect human dignity but also on different private fronts. There seems to be a gap between knowing (promising) and doing. Closing this gap will amount to progress not only in the aspect of upholding human dignity but in other sectors of life in the country.

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