

THE IMPACT 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 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. The paper is anchored or explained better based on theoretical analysis. 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 recommended 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 women in Nigeria should be given active roles to play in governance of this country.

Keywords: Insurgency, Women, Violence, Security, Threat

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 worshipping centres especially in the Northerestern part of Nigeria (Blanchard, 2014).

The group of Boko Haram 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.

According to United State 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. Therefore, one many guesses that what could be done to protect the lives of citizens especially the women? How does the act of rape and violation affects women? All these are the questions that bothered the researcher to investigate and proffer solutions to the problem under the study.

Theoretical Analysis on Women Violence

The purpose of theories in any research is to explain the variable or variables under discussion in a clear term. Therefore, difference 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 American Soldier” (1949).

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 group feel deprived when their circumstances are negatively compared to the situations of others. It describe feelings or measures of economic, political or social deprivation. Relative deprivation linked to partly poverty and social exclusion (Flynn, 2011).

Martin (2006) argued that deprived group employ 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 were 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 the use of 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 Framework: Insurgency and Women Violence

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) defined insurgency as a violent attempt to take the control of a government in an

illegal manner. Also, United State 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 threats such as, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or in private life.

Bouta (2005) define violence against women as a crime against individual and an act of aggression against the community and the nation 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 precisely.

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 which include Borno state, Yobe state, Zamfara state etc. The violence escalated dramatically in 2014 till today. The resultant effect include kidnapping, banditry, cattle rustling etc.

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. It does not only include the harms produced for the actions of terrorists groups brings suffering and hardship to the women in the different part of the world precisely Nigeria (Plaza, 2017).

Also, gendered orders of violence are built through the different institutions of the state, the military and the bureaucracy and these are also entrenched in the religious beliefs, language and symbolic orders, they are dynamics and are organized along the lines of gender and class identities.

Holland (2006), explained that the state is the producer of public security and private security. However, government of Nigeria failed in totality to do so.

Many factors were responsible for the various violence perpetrated against women by Boko Haram. One of these is their emphasis on forced imposition of sharia through rigidly gendered ideological structured. Ideology is one of the possible factors women based violence committed by Boko Haram members which is

conceptualized by an institutionalized and discriminatory practice within Nigeria culture, where women are seen as assets and are 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 were a series of abduction of secondary school girls 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 a widespread campaign using female suicide bombers, through manipulations.

Implication 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 went through because of rape, is one of the factors pushes a woman to be involved in violent acts. Bloom (2007), explained that in some instances women are sexually abused by the insurgents, since the abuse tends to stigmatize women and many commit suicide.

Another important implication has to do with the health of women. Haider (2015), maintained that women health impact on sexual violence against women is great. These healths 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 terrorist is misconceived to be a male issue. Nevertheless, the proportion of women involved in terrorist group is still small in comparison to men (Plaza, 2017).

Furthermore, the insurgents had causes 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. However, the wives of these soldiers become widows and their children become fatherless.

Conclusion

The academic discourse of insurgency clearly revealed 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 prevailed the failure of government to curb the menace. Women in Nigeria especially in the North Eastern part of country suffers 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.

Recommendations

Insurgency is a negation to the core value of Africa especially Nigeria. Therefore, the following points are suggested as possible solutions to end or ameliorate this problem in Nigeria:-

- Adequate security 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 tackle the menace out rightly.
- The first against insurgency should be everybody's business. Every citizen 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 block all the channels of finances of insurgents in Nigeria.
- 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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