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Appraisal of the Impact of Boko-Haram Insurgency on Women and Children in Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at an exegetical exposition and appraisal of the impact of Boko-Haram insurgency on women and children in Nigeria. Using the philosophical method of hermeneutics and Turabian documentation, the paper painstakingly studies Boko-Haram insurgency in Nigeria and by critical analysis, states the degree of harm caused to women and children. In an attempt to achieve the stated aim, the paper studies the advent of Boko-Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Also, the paper studies the effect of Boko-Haram to Nigerian citizens and national development. Most importantly, the paper studies the devastating impact of Boko-Haram to women and children in Nigeria. Our findings reveal that women and children bear the greatest brunt of Boko-Haram insurgency in Nigeria minding the vulnerability of this class of persons in Nigerian society and the laissez-faire attitude of the government towards quelling the menace of Boko-Haram insurgency. In the same vein, our findings reveal that Boko-Haram insurgency has warranted unmitigated dooms such as; death of very many Nigerians, economic downturn, psychological trauma, widened ethnocentrism, internal displacement, loss of livelihood and criminal acts such as abduction, robbery and rape. Most devastating is that many women and children lose their lives to Boko-Haram insurgency and many others are turned to widows and orphans as a result of the loss of their husbands and fathers respectively. On appraisal, the paper proves that Boko-Haram insurgency has done great harm to women and children in Nigeria minding the degree of dehumanization caused to this class of persons. In view of the exposed status quo of women and children, the implication of this paper is a clarion call on all and sundry. The government is called upon to provide the necessary panacea to cushion the impact of Boko-Haram on women and children such as; stopping the rampage of Boko-Haram, better equipment of the internally displaced persons' camps, adequate feeding, empowerment schemes, medical and psychological assistance (trauma centers), e.t.c. Similarly, Non-Governmental Organizations and religious bodies are called upon to redeem the devastation of Boko-Haram on women and children such that the dignity of women and children be restored.

Keywords: Boko-Haram, Insurgency, Women, Children, Security

INTRODUCTION

No doubt women and children are the most vulnerable class of persons in the world in all ramifications. The female gender has suffered gender discrimination and violence stemming from political, cultural, social, economic,

violence of different degrees and religious reasons. Both women and children are physically vulnerable, psychologically dependent especially in matters of security and empowerment. [1] [2] [3] Hence women and children bear the

brunt of war, family crisis, relationship distress, national chaos and insurgency. This vulnerability extends to a secondary effect of whatever happens to their husbands/fathers such that their state as widows and orphans in most cases are the worst things one can ever imagine [4].

Most unfortunately, this class of persons constitutes over sixty-five percent of Nigerian population. Unarguably, women contribute to a large extent in community's economic and political development, family management and industrial growth. [5] This shows that whatever, affects this class of persons in Nigerian society has an unavoidable and corresponding impact on the entire country. Nevertheless, for the reason that Nigeria like other African countries is typically a masculine state, women are dependent on men even for the developmental strides mentioned above such that their condition becomes helpless at the death of the man of the house.

Hence the vulnerability and the value of this class of persons in the society make this research most significant. By careful analysis, this paper exposes the disheartening impact of Boko-Haram to women and children in Nigeria. Boko-Haram has destroyed many lives and properties in many states especially in the Northern Nigeria [6]. It has displaced millions of Nigerians from their homes

leading to the construction of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in various parts of Nigeria. Unfortunately, life in these IDP camps is so miserable that they lack the basic needs for human survival such as food, shelter, education, medical and psychological attention. More so Boko-Haram has engaged in highly appalling and heinous activities such as destruction of schools, kidnapping of school girls in Chibok and Dapchi hence scotching education and civilization [7].

It is disheartening that Nigeria has the necessary protocols and laws to guide the dignity of women and children but these are virulently abused. Nigeria is a champion on the "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women" (CEDAW), the protocol of "African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Rights of Women in Africa", "Child Right Act", "Violence Against Persons Prohibition Acts", e.t.c. It sounds bizarre that despite these wonderful counsels and protocols for the protection of women and children in Nigeria, the government still handles affairs pertaining to this class of persons with *laisser-faire* [8].

Hence this paper serves as a wakeup call on the government and other relevant Non-Governmental agencies to join the crusade towards saving women and children from the disheartening impact and damnation of Boko-Haram in Nigeria.

UNDERSTANDING BOKO-HARAM INSURGENCY IN NIGERIA.

Insurgency can be understood as an attack on an unprotected member of the public resulting into wounds or injuries, loss of lives and properties, internal displacement of persons or groups of persons from their living environment, e.t.c. Similarly, insurgency is the state of insurrection, rebellion or sedition to a constituted authority or government. Hence simply put, insurgency is violence organized by individual or group to fight or oppose the implementation of law or government [9] [10]. Therefore, insurgency is characterized by two main features of crime and inhuman treatment or violation of human rights.

The most unbearable and notorious insurgency group in Nigeria is the Boko-Haram sect. Boko-Haram or the Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'Awati WalJihad is a terrorist group who oppose government, western education and civilization. It began like a small Sunni Islamic sect supporting a firm clarification and execution of Islamic law for Nigerians. According to [11], the name Boko-Haram was derived from Hausa language which means "western language is sinful". Boko-Haram not only rejects western culture but government, modern sciences and civilization. This sect started their activities since 2002 but was not popular until 2009.

[12] Mallam Mohammed Yusuf is said to be the official founder of Boko Haram in 2002 in Maiduguri with the aim of establishing Sharia government in Borno and neighbouring states. Nevertheless, it began as a prelude with the name Shabaab Muslim Youth Organization in 1995 with Mallam Lawal as the leader. [13] The leadership of Mallam Mohammed Yusuf opened the group to political influence and popularity. Boko-Haram violent tendencies became a trait to peace in Nigeria after the death of Yusuf while in police custody, his father in-law and sect financier, Ustaz Buji Foi, and other members.

Perhaps, the death of its initial leadership and Abubakar Shekau a Kanuri native who once boasted saying; "I enjoy killing any one that Allah commands me to kill-the way I enjoy killing chickens and rams", increased the terrorism of the sect especially in the Northern and gradually to the Southern and Western Nigeria [14]. Hence they turned to the use of lethal weapons such as: rocket propelled grenades (RPGs), anti-tank missiles, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), surface-to-air missiles, armoured tanks, A-K 47 assault rifles, as well as machetes and daggers, e.t.c .

However, a brutal attack on this sect leading to the death of over 800 members

in 2009 was a big blow to this group. Nevertheless, in 2010, they were full-blown terrorists with attacks on police stations and military barracks, jailbreaks to free members, release of detained colleagues, restoration of its destroyed mosque and compensation for members killed by troops. All these were in their attempt to avenge the supposed killings of Yusuf and other comrades [15].

The sects' core beliefs are strict adherence to the Quran and the Hadith.

From the outset the sect's mission was to impose Sharia on Nigeria, the leadership went about its preaching and interpretation of the Quran as a recipe for violence and an affront to constituted authority. The Boko Haram in the early stage was a mobilization of women and children, school dropouts and unemployed university and polytechnic graduates and most of whom were encouraged to tear their certificates.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN ON THE BRUNT OF BOKO-HARAM IN NIGERIA.

Amnesty International Report shows that women and children bear the highest brunt of Boko-Haram insurgency in Nigeria [16]. This is because of their predispositions and vulnerability in the society. Women and children bear both primary and secondary effects of Boko-Haram. Primary effect refers to the victims of direct attack by Boko-Haram leading to death, injury, lost of security, properties, e.t.c. Also, secondary effect refers to the impact resulting from Boko-Haram attack on a third party. Women and children are said to receive primary effect of Boko-Haram when they are directly attacked while the secondary effect is when their husband or fathers are attacked hence leaving the wives and children of such men as widows and orphans respectively. [17] Though women are not always endangered directly by

death but they bear the brunt of the death of their husbands and sometimes they end up in IDP camps. The study made by Shehu Mohammed, shows that Boko-Haram has led to a huge number of orphaned children and widows such that over 80% of all the peoples in IDPs are women and children. Unfortunately, there in the IDP camps, they suffer lots of inhuman treatment such as socio-psychological, medical, economic and ecological trials. In the IDP camps, they lack basic hygiene, nourishment, mental and academic shortfalls [18].

In addition, it is on record that beside the many men killed leaving their wives and children widows and fatherless, many more have been badly wounded, maimed and exposed to deep agony and pain. In the same vein, several others are passing through insensitive and humiliating

actions in military and police custody. This ugly situation has led to miscarriage, poor child care, poor antenatal care for pregnant women, poor maternity for nursing mothers, e.t.c. This intolerable condition made some women abandon their children after birth and exposed to health challenges. The degree of abuse and abandonment of babies after birth as reported by NEMA is over five thousand for Northeastern Nigerian States for the fear of Boko-Haram .

A targeted attack on women is an obvious game for the insurgents. In 2013, Boko-Haram insurgents attacked a girls' secondary school in Chibok and kidnapped about two hundred and sixty girls. After series of negotiations with the federal government, some of the girls were released. These victims were abused in different forms such as sexual harassment, forceful conversion to Islam, e.t.c. This atrocious attitude to women repeated itself in February 2018, when about one hundred and ten girls were abducted again but this time in Dapchi, Yobe State. After negotiations with the federal government, one hundred and nine were released. About five girls died for the reason of stampede and one Leah Sharibu was held hostage because she refused to convert to Islam. On their release, the girls were warned sternly never to return to school lest worse things will happen to them. More so

Santrock noted that many people have been carried away as detainees or child-soldiers by Boko-Haram revolutionaries. [19] This situation exposes children to arms, decolonizes their minds and predisposes them to so many social evils such as murder, rape, hurt or harm to others.

Before the advent of Boko-Haram insurgency in Nigeria, girl child education was very unpopular especially in the northern Nigeria. [20] This culture was inimical to civilization. Unfortunately, Boko-Haram made it much more difficult for the few persons who chose to send their girl-child to school. The impact of Boko-Haram has become an inauspicious monster threatening the girl-child chances of civilization and western education as most parents prefer not to send their girl child to school and safe her life than send her to school and lose her to the hands of wicked abductors [21]. Little wonder Ugwumba remarked that the repeated attack on several schools across the north-eastern region of Nigeria is a terrible obstacle to education for a large number of children especially the girls. Their disposition to study is no doubt affected by this menace. Withdrawal from schools and inconstancy in attending school activities for fear of insurgency became a safety measure.

[22] It is on record that Boko-Haram is not the only offender to the abuse and killing

of women. The government agencies and security personnels cash into the opportunity created by Boko-Haram to abuse women. Little wonder Osita Njoku observed that;

Boko-Haram is not the only offender in the women abuse in Northern region of Nigeria but the government security agents also contribute to the raping and killings of both men and women in the region [23]. An eye witness reported that women have been randomly arrested and abused by some government security personnel for the simple reason that their family members are alleged associates of Boko-Haram sects.

In the same vein, Boko-Haram has warranted massive migration out of the distressed areas. Massive migration out of the insurgency stressed areas increases family stress and discomfort. The effect of this migration is suffered most by women and children. The discomfort of relocation and adaptation is a major challenge here minding our earlier claim that women are home keepers, producers, community organizers, e.t.c. In most cases, this sudden movement or relocation affects the petty business of the people such that the relocation is welcomed with economic stress to the family. On the part of the children, such relocation forces them to drop out of school or change to other available schools which may not be of a good

standard. It is heartbreaking to note that many more who were not able to relocate died because of hunger and lack of care.

[24] In the same vein, the mass exodus of people from the Northern Nigeria warranted increase in population overflow in many cities of Nigeria especially in the Southern and Western parts such as Abuja, Lagos, Port Harcourt, Enugu, Akwa Ibom, Owerri e.t.c. This automatically led to scarcity of houses and increase in house rent in these new areas. More so this experience led to the reduction of patronage of products from the northern region following the mutual mistrust existing between the north and other regions of Nigeria [25]. Sometime, it was rumored that Boko-Haram had poisoned products from the Northern Nigeria to other parts of Nigeria.

Unequivocally, Boko-Haram has unleashed unwanton hardship to Nigeria and her citizens especially women and children. [26] [27] Our finding revealed that the economic growth status of Nigeria since the inception of insurgencies has remained tepid because the socio-economic and political resources that ought to have been channelled to the development of the entire country is being wasted on various efforts geared towards checkmating and possibly, annihilating Boko-Haram. [28] Also, it has imposed great economic hardship on families making it difficult for families to

meet up with their basic responsibilities of upkeep and child training/education. Unquestionably, economic development and insurgency are negatively co-relational while economic development is positively co-relational to peaceful state so much so that economic development

becomes a mirage in the Boko-Haram stricken country like Nigeria. Therefore, Boko-Haram is an enemy to be eschewed and uprooted minding its ruinous and perilous impact on women and children in Nigeria [29].

CONCLUSION

This paper has made a dogged effort towards presenting a chronicle of facts on the impact of Boko-Haram insurgency on women and children in Nigeria. We have identified in the paper that Boko-Haram began in Borno State of Nigeria and spread the other parts of Nigeria especially the Northern states: Adamawa, Gomber, Kano, Yobe and Abuja. Their targeted places include: Churches, Schools, Mosque, Police Stations, Motor parks, public offices, e.t.c. Also, they target everybody who by such action, they would increase tension and chaos in order to sale their goods of terrorism, insurrection, rebellion or sedition to a constituted authority or government in their war against western education and civilization. Hence this paper paid particular attention to the tool of hermeneutics towards extracting the implications and adverse effects of Boko-Haram insurgency on women and children.

The paper concurs with the report of Amnesty International stating that women

and children are the most vulnerable and as such bear the highest brunt of Boko-Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Little wonder Boko-Haram has led to a huge number of orphaned children and widows such that over 80% of all the peoples in IDPs are women and children. These IDP camps are not well equipped such that the inmates suffer lots of inhuman treatment such as poor health care, socio-psychological, economic and ecological dangers. They lack basic hygiene, nourishment, mental and academic needs and many die when this condition becomes so unbearable for human survival.

Their attack on schools shows their stand against education and civilization. This led to the kidnapping of about two hundred and sixty Chibok school girls in 2013 and about one hundred and ten Dapchi school girls. The impact of these kidnapping is that women and children being so vulnerable would shy away from western education hence their derivative name as Boko-Haram meaning, 'western

education is a sin'. Undoubtedly, the impact of Boko-Haram has become an inauspicious monster threatening the girl-child chances of civilization and western education so much so that most parents prefer not to send their girl child to school than lose her to the hands Boko-Haram.

Boko-Haram Insurgency led to incessant migration of victims. Unfortunately, the effect of this migration is suffered most by women and children with the discomfort of relocation and adaptation as a major challenge. In the same vein, several others are passing through

humiliating condition in military and police custody for the reason of congestion, hunger, thirsty and other health related problems. This ugly situation has led to miscarriage, poor child care, poor antenatal care, poor maternity for nursing mothers, e.t.c. This intolerable condition made some women abandon their children after birth. More unfortunate is that Boko-Haram insurgency has amplified the number of IDPs in the country making Nigeria one of the highest IDP populations in Africa while women and children constitute the greatest occupants of the IDP camp.

RECOMMENDATION

Hence this paper is a clarion call on the government and other relevant agencies to undertake the elimination of these threats in Nigeria. Hence we recommend the following:

1. The federal government should formulate and effectively implement policies and programmes capable of addressing the root causes of insurgency in Nigeria such as poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, infrastructure, uneven development, e.t.c.
2. That Nigerian government makes effort towards reconstructing the

schools affected and provide adequate security to the students.

3. The government should provide special economic intervention programmes and bail out especially to the affected areas.
4. The government should provide rehabilitation and trauma centre centres in the affected areas especially for women and children to reduce Post-Traumatic Stress and Disorder (PSTD).
5. There is need for employment and empowerment opportunities to the affected victims.

6. Particular interest in the security of schools, churches, mosques, public offices and other targeted areas.
7. Politicians should desist from misappropriating funds spent for security and upkeep of victims leading to avoidable deaths.

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