

TERRORISM AND THE PLIGHT OF WOMEN IN INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS CAMPS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study focuses on terrorism and the plight of women in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps in Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to examine the nature of challenges faced by women in IDPs camp and the factors responsible for the plight of women and to suggest measures to curbing the challenges. The method adopted for the study was qualitative using descriptive and analytical approaches. Key Informant Interview was used in the data collection process. The target population for the study consisted of women that lived at IDPs camps in the past and at present. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents for interview. The findings shows that the nature of challenges faced by women in IDPs camp include hunger, sexual exploitation, rape, molestation, restricted movement, poor sanitation, and corrupt practices of officials. Based on the findings the following measures are recommended to minimize the challenges (1) provision of well-planned and organized IDPs camps; (2) adequate provisions of aids and food supply; and (3) increase in the number of female security officials in camps in order to curb the challenges faced by women in IDPs camps.

Keywords: Terrorism, Plight, Internally displaced persons, Camps, Women

Introduction

Terrorism seems to be the biggest threat to global peace and stability in contemporary times. Since the dawn of the millennium, the incidence of the terrorism has been on a steady increase worldwide. Terrorism is a term used to describe violence or other harmful acts. It is a form of unconventional warfare, sometimes used to force socio-political change by convincing a government or population to agree to demands to avoid future harm or fear of harm. It also refers to destabilization of existing government, motivating a discontented population to join a mutiny, escalating a conflict in the hope of upsetting the status quo, expressing an injustice, or drawing attention to a cause (Eke, 2013). In other words, terrorism is defined as the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political, or social objective. According to Ferguson (2001) terrorism means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combat targets by sub-national. Dempsey (2006) posited that terrorism is a failure of political process that begins with inequalities, corruption and injustice in a given political system and moves from frustrated attempts at reform that breed fear and anger to political confrontation and conspicuously erupted into violence. However, in this paper terrorism is conceived as those acts that are carried out by a

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fanatical religious sect or persons due to grievances against the government and the institution of state. This can be exemplified by the activities of Boko Haram terrorist group in the northern part of Nigeria. The Islamist terrorist group known as Boko Haram (*Jamā'a Ahl al-sunnah li-da'wa wa al-jihād*), became active in Nigeria in the year 2002, when it was founded by Muhammed Yusuf (Tonwe & Eke 2013). The Nigerian government in 2009 attempted to quash an uprising by the group across North-eastern Nigeria (Adesoji 2010), but this was short-lived. Following the extra-judicial killing of Muhammed Yusuf, the second-in-command, Abubakar Shekau took over the mantle of leadership in the group, and announced in a statement that jihad has begun (Zenn 2013).

According to Zenn and Pearson (2014) Boko Haram carried out a series of kidnappings, in which one of the main features was the instrumental use of women. Ojo, Ayesoro, and Ojile (2017) observed that the involvement of women in terrorism is relatively new. A number of women were either forced or cajoled to join terrorist organizations. Women help terrorist organizations to source for information, gather intelligence, provide domestic care and succor to terrorist. Also, women perform tougher roles in terrorist organizations in recent years as they engaged directly in attacks, and suicide bombings. More than ever, women became the cheap target of terrorism as Boko Haram members in the northern region of Nigeria captured and exploited women and converted them to Islam under threat of death (Nwose, 2012). In addition, Boko Haram members often raped teenagers and elderly women. Young girls are forcefully abducted and married off after their first menstruation (The Source, 2014). Victims and survivors of terrorist onslaught often suffer psychological trauma and other health challenges such as sexually transmitted infections, visco vagina fistula, HIV/AIDS among others. This could be observed at various Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps in Nigeria, most especially in the northern part of the country. In view of these challenges, this study focuses on Terrorism and the plight of women in IDPs in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Terrorism and insecurity in Nigeria most especially north-eastern part of Nigeria has hampered educational, religious and other socio-political activities. Okoli and Iortyer (2014) corroborated this position; they observed that normal productive agricultural and commercial activities are hampered by the occupation of terrorists. Furthermore, women in IDPs are confronted with numerous challenges such as hunger, rape, molestation, poor sanitation, infant mortality and corrupt activities of officials. Human Rights Watch report (2016) documented sexual abuse, including rape and exploitation, of 43 women and girls living in seven internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital. The victims had been displaced from several Borno towns and villages, including Abadam, Bama, Baga, Damasak, Dikwa, Gamboru Ngala, Gwoza, Kukawa, and Walassa. It is disgraceful and outrageous that people who should protect these women and girls are attacking and abusing them. According to Human Right Watch, some of the victims were drugged and raped, while others were coerced into sex through forced marriage, promise of material or financial assistance. Many of those coerced into sex were often abandoned when they became pregnant. They and their children suffered discrimination, abuse, and stigmatization from other camp residents. Victims of rape and sexual exploitation may not seek health care, and psychological

counseling, due to the shame they experience. There is need therefore to examine terrorism and the plight of women in IDPs camps in Nigeria with a view to put a stop to the incessant sexual violence and other corrupt practices that characterize IDPs camps in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

- i. examine the nature of challenges faced by women in IDPs camps
- ii. examine the factors responsible for the plight of women in IDPs camps
- iii. highlight measures of curbing the challenges faced by women in IDPs camps

Research Questions

- i. What is the nature of challenges faced by women in IDPs camps?
- ii. What are the factors responsible for the plight of women in IDPs camps?
- iii. What are the measures to curb the challenges faced by women in IDPs camps?

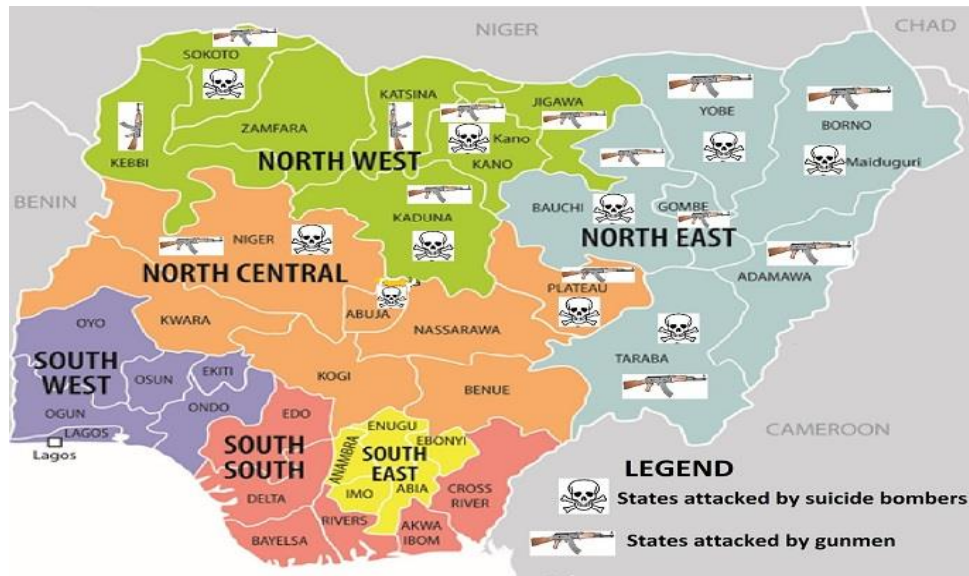
Literature Review

The plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is only recently receiving serious attention. Hitherto, attention was principally focused on refugees as defined by various international conventions and protocols (Ibeanu, 1998). A survey of displacement generating conflicts in Nigeria shows that conflicts surrounding the oil industry (exploitation, mining and refining); communal conflicts, including ethnic and religious conflicts; and conflicts thrown up by the democratization process, especially over centralization and political representation are common in Nigeria. In recent times, terrorism epitomized by the activities of Boko Haram generated a significant number of Internally Displaced Persons.

Terrorism in the real sense of the term became more pronounced in Nigeria with the activities of Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, commonly known as 'Boko Haram'. Boko-Haram insurgency gained international attention & recognition and become a major national menace after the kidnapping of Chibok girls from their schools in Borno state. Other atrocities committed by the terrorist group include the killings and slaughtering of students in their dormitories in Buni-Yadi and Potiskum all in Yobe State and later the kidnapping and abduction of other women and children from their homes and communities (Tella, 2015). Due to these criminalities and terrorist activities, so many local government areas in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe were lost to the Boko-Haram terrorist and remained under their control for almost two years. People fled for safety, properties worth billions of naira were destroyed. As a result, Internally Displaced Persons camps were established in Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, Bauchi, Gombe, Nasarawa, Taraba, and Abuja.

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The map below shows the states affected by the activities of Boko Haram terrorists.



Source: www.google.com.ng

There is no legal definition for IDPs as there is for Refugees. However, the United Nations report, guiding principles on Internal Displacement posit that IDPs are groups that are forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or homes, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border (Adenitan, 2014). The ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors are often due to armed conflict or violation of human right(s) or man-made disasters. In other words, displaced persons are individuals or groups of persons who have been forced or obligated to flee or to have cause to leave their homes due to the effect of armed conflict, violations of human rights, situations of generalized violence, natural or manmade disasters, to another place considered relatively safe within their own national borders. Ibeanu (1999) submitted that IDPs are those who seek relocation due to a conflict in their region. However, Hampton (2013) opted that people that flee their homes to seek safer net within the confines of their national borders or home country are classified as IDPs. Irrespective of the cause of the displacement, the phenomenon always leaves negative socio-economic footprints on millions of people worldwide.

IDPs encounter enormous challenges and uncertainty in camps, which ranges from the right to property to dehumanizing conditions. Poverty and hunger, diseases, neglects and feelings of alienations among others scourge them. All these conspire to worsen their status as internally displaced persons to psychosocially and emotionally displaced persons. According to Adenitan (2014) there is no clear international responsibility for assisting and protecting the internally displaced aside the general international humanitarian law, this makes displaced persons most especially women susceptible to sexual exploitation, rape and other dehumanizing conditions. Kelly (2000), contends that in period of violence, there is a likelihood to experience the effect of the vulnerability of a particular kind, linked to gender. Thus, analyzing the position of Kelly,

one could apprehend the rate of exposure of women to threats in IDPs camps. Reimann (2002) clearly observed that majority of reported cases of sexual violence is usually against the women and girl-child who experience variations of physical dangers compared to men. Women are considered most vulnerable and often exposed to a high degree of risk, which ranges from sexual exploitation to becoming victims of domestic violence or being impregnated by enemy soldiers. It has also been stated by the Brookings Institute that the degrees of violations that IDPs women often experienced deserves specific attention. Consequently, terms of violation vary from one victim to another, as some IDP women may be confronted with the discrimination including access to property, land, education and documentation. In other scenarios, there is the high tendency of violation among the women who are in camps where the camp administrators often aggravate their conditions (Brookings Institute 2014). From the foregoing, a study of terrorism and the plight of women in IDPs camp is appropriate as women face challenges that endangered their wellbeing on daily bases.

Theoretical Framework

This study is hinged on the conflict theory in line with the study conducted by Alawemo and Muterera (2010). They argue that most people suffer from the dire effects of conflict, while women and girls are impacted differently because of their gender and the economic position they occupy in society. Besides the suffering experienced through death, injury, displacement, loss of home and property in the outbreaks of violence; women experience abduction, sexual abuse and systematic rape as they are specially targeted as a tactic of war and terror. Women and children make up a higher proportion of casualties of these conflicts because they are less prepared to defend themselves. Consequently, they are selected as easy targets for random and systematic acts of violence. Alawemo and Muterera further noted that they were not only physically harassed but also sexually abused, degraded and raped.

The crust of conflict theory as propounded by Karl Marx revolves around economic exploitation in which the powerful class lord it over the less powerful or powerless class. According to Karl Marx capitalism, like previous socioeconomic systems, would inevitably produce internal tensions leading to its own destruction. Marx envisaged radical change, advocating proletarian revolution and freedom from the bourgeoisie (ruling classes). According to Marx, most of the people living in capitalist societies did not see how the system shaped the entire operation of society. Just as modern individuals see private property and the right to pass that property on to their children as natural, many of the members in capitalistic societies see the rich as having earned their wealth through hard work and education, while seeing the poor as lacking in skill and initiative. Marx rejected this type of thinking and termed it false consciousness, explanations of social problems as the shortcomings of individuals rather than the flaws of society. Marx wanted to replace this kind of thinking with class consciousness, the workers' recognition of themselves as a class unified in opposition to capitalists and ultimately to the capitalist system itself. In general, Marx wanted the proletarians to rise up against the capitalists and overthrow the capitalist system. According to Marx, the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. (Marx and Engels, 1848). Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and

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journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, they noted that in the earlier periods, there is almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a gradation of social rank. In contemporary societies according to Marx, new classes, new conditions of oppression and new forms of struggle have replaced the old ones. The society has simplified the class antagonism into two great classes; the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

It must be noted however that the conflict theory goes beyond mere economic exploitation; as it is also applicable to other forms of exploitations. The IDPs camp officials that exploit and harasses the women on camp are doing so because they wield economic and socio-political power in the camp. They are the ones in charge of distribution of foods and other aids. This gives them an advantage and an opportunity to exploit the displaced persons sexually and otherwise. Women and girls are exposed to sexual abuse as they are coerced to submission in order to obtain food and other necessities they need to survive. It is painful to note that women and girls that were victims of rape and other forms of sexual exploitation could be infected with HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. For example, Alawemo and Muterera observed that during the 2010 crisis in Jos; Central Nigeria, women and girls suffered the worst form of sexual abuse. There was a case of about twenty women and girls captured by the Boghom people and taken to a village called Kangyal in Kanam Local Government Area. The women and their daughters suffered the worst form of sexual abuse as their captors took turns on them every evening for three months. When they were eventually rescued, five out of the twenty were pregnant and tested positive to HIV/AIDS. More than the health implications, this could eventually lead to ostrization, ridicule and low economic performance.

Methodology

The method adopted for this study is the qualitative method using descriptive and analytical approaches based on information gathered. Key Informant Interview is used in the data collection process. The process involved in conducting the key informant interview can best be described as the process of inquiry involving a gradual clarification of the research problems. The target population of this study consisted of women that lived at IDPs camps in the past and at present. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents for interview from four camps that have more than five hundred IDPs.. The adoption of purposive sampling was to ensure that key informants who had firsthand experience of the situation and living conditions of women in IDPs camp were selected from the population. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling technique, which is characterized by the use of judgment and deliberate effort to obtain representative samples by including presumable typical groups in the sample (Addai, 2005). The sample size for this study is 50. An interview guide was used to elicit information from key informants. The interview guide was structured to capture information on the experiences of internally displaced women that once lived or are currently living in IDPs camps, this method become expedient because majority of the women can not read or write in English. Questions were asked on the plight of women and the challenges encountered at the camp. Questions were also asked on factors responsible for such challenges. The questions probed into why exploitation of women

continues unabated in IDPs camps. Consequently, Informants were asked to suggest measures to curb the challenges experienced by women and alleviate the plight of women in IDPs camps.

Discussion of Findings

In the light of the objectives of the study and the research questions, the responses elicited from respondents shows that the nature of challenges faced by women in IDPs camp includes, hunger due to shortage in the supply of food, and the fact that some officials do diverting raw food materials to other location, other challenges include sexual exploitation, rape, molestation, restricted movement, poor sanitation due to inadequate toilet and waste disposal facilities, and corrupt practices of officials. Some of the responses given by respondents were stated below.

Sexual Exploitation

Majority of the respondents observed that sexual exploitation goes on daily in camps as displaced persons have to be married or attached sexually to camp officials in order to get the best supply of aids. A woman from Bama, near Maiduguri, stated that she fled Bama after members of the dreaded terrorist group Boko Haram killed her husband. According to her:

Two weeks after my arrival on camp, a soldier came to me asking me to marry him. He usually brings food and clothes for me. After a lot of pressure from him, I allowed him to have sex with me. Two months later he just stopped coming. Then I realized I was pregnant. I feel so angry with him for deceiving me. When he was pretending to woo me he used to provide for me, but as soon as I agreed and we began having sex, his behavior changed towards me. (1DI/young lady/Bama/2018)

Another respondent, a woman from Baga said a soldier showed interest in her by bringing food items and clothes to her:

He is one of the popular soldiers here. I accepted him because I needed help to take care of my four children. Feeding in the camp is only once a day so you have to accept any help that comes. We started having sex in my camp tent at night. Five months later when I realized I was pregnant and told him, he stopped coming to me. (IDI/ middle age woman/Baga/2018)

Similarly, a young beautiful girl narrated her ordeal with a member of the Civilian Joint Task Force in the camp:

Ahmed was one of the camp officials. He promised to help and marry me. He usually take me out in his car. When I told him I was pregnant, he ask me to abort the pregnancy. I refused and he said if I would not abort we should separate. I reported him to the Army officers but nothing was done to him. (IDI/teenager/Baga/2018)

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All the above reports corroborate Reimann (2002), who observed that majority of reported cases of sexual violence is usually against the women and girl-child who experience variations of physical dangers compared to men. Women are considered most vulnerable and often exposed to a high degree of risk, which ranges from sexual exploitation to becoming victims of domestic violence or being impregnated by enemy soldiers, the only difference here is that, most of the women were molested by those that were charged with the responsibly of providing care and security for those in the IDPs.

Rape

A respondent said that a member of Civilian Joint Task Force initially gave her privileges, including passes that allowed her to leave the camp, but then raped her:

The man is an Alfa, he usually advice me to be a good Muslim girl and not to join bad groups. He allowed me to go outside the camp when necessary. When he asked me to visit his newly allocated room in the camp, I didn't see any reason not to go because I trusted him. He gave me a bottled of drink, and I immediately felt dizzy and slept off. I don't know what happened thereafter but when I woke up I did not see him, and I was feeling pain in my private part. I could not walk properly for three days. Some weeks later I was told at the hospital that I was pregnant. He denied having anything to do with me. (IDI/young lady/ Bama/2018)

One other respondent, a 22 year old girl who fled a brutal Boko Haram attack on Baga, said she was drugged and raped by a vigilante member in charge of distributing food items and other aid in the camp:

He would bring food items to me so I think he really wanted to marry me. But he was also asking me for sex. I always tell him I was young. The day he raped me, he offered me a drink in his camp room. As soon as I drank it, I slept off. When I woke up, I was in pain, and blood was coming out of vagina. I felt weak and could not walk well. I did not tell anyone because I was afraid. When my menstrual period did not come, I knew I was pregnant and just wanted to die because the man ran away from the camp. (IDI/young lady/ Baga/2018)

Hunger and Restricted Movement

Respondents noted that they were not allowed to go out of camp in spite of shortages in the supply of food and other items. A number of them stated that they had to beg camp officials to intervene with the guards before a pass can be given. Hence, it was very easy for camp official to take advantage of the Internally Displaced Persons. Some of the informants had this to say:

We are not allowed to go out to find work or get extra food. They usually distribute tickets sometimes at midnight. If you don't get a ticket you will not get food. The IDP officials distribute the tickets to their families and girlfriends first before others.

We used to get food at least twice a day when I first came to the camp, but now, sometimes we get nothing at all. We can't even buy food ourselves because they will not let us go out. (IDI/ old woman/Dikwa/2018)

The situation in which internally displaced persons find themselves was pathetic. Most of the displaced persons especially women lack mental health support. Many of the women and girls interviewed had bad experiences that affected their psychological well-being. Some of them stated that they have difficulty sleeping, and sometimes have a flash back of the attack that led to their displacement.

A larger number of respondents noted that poor organization, overpopulation, inadequate supply of aids and greediness on the part of corrupt officials are some of the factors responsible for the plight of women in IDPs camp. According to one of the respondents:

If this camp is well organized, there will be no problem. The officials will know the number of people here and plan for their feeding and other things very well.

Another respondent observed that the officials are very greedy; they collect salary and will still go ahead to steal items given to us by government for their personal use.(IDI/old woman/kukuwa/2018)

From the majority of the respondents, it was clear that the internally displaced persons are facing many challenges especially women. Based on the findings, the following measures are suggested to curbing the challenges faced by Internally Displaced Persons, most especially women.

- i. IDPs camps should be well planned and organized to avoid chaotic situation that leads to molestation and other vices.
- ii. The total population of camp residents should be known and documented by officials in order to make adequate provisions of aids and food supply.
- iii. Male camp officials should be restricted from having unrestrained access to females on camp, this will help reduce sexual molestation and sexual assault, harassment and exploitation.
- iv. More female security personnel should be posted to camps to protect women and girls from sexual exploitation and rape.
- v. Reported cases of rape, sexual exploitation, molestation and so on should be taken seriously; and culprits should be punished to serve as deterrent to others with similar intention.

Conclusion

This study has been able to throw light on terrorism and the plight of women in Internally Displaced Persons camps, most of which are located in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria. Women and girls experience sexual exploitation, rape, molestation, hunger etc on daily basis in the various IDPs camp. The study shows that these challenges can be surmounted with appropriate political will. The government is expected to provide gender-sensitive training for members of the civilian joint task force, police, military

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units and others who come in contact with displaced persons. Also, effective mechanisms for prosecution of offenders and law enforcement should be established at IDPs camp. Adequate provisions should be made to cater for the needs of internally displaced persons, most especially women.

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