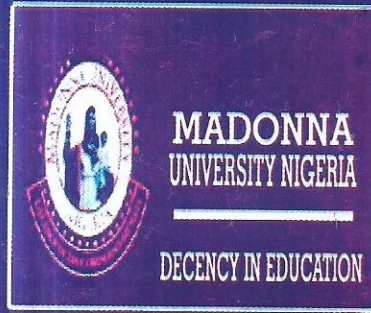


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**TERRORISM/INSURGENCY AND THE WELFARE OF THE AFRICAN CHILD:
THE CASE OF BOKO HARAM IN NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

Terrorism/Insurgency and other forms of Militancy or armed conflict have posed a serious threat to the wellbeing of human race especially children in recent time both in Africa and other parts of the world. This study examined the impact of terrorism or Insurgency on the welfare of the African child using the activities of the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria as a reference point. Cross sectional survey research design was employed and data collected using structured questionnaire which was administered to 180 respondents of different occupational ladder in the three states (Benue, Enugu and Edo) of Nigeria which were randomly chosen. The study was anchored on two theories; the multi-factoral theory of social change and Differential opportunity theory. Findings emanating from the study showed that Boko Haram in Nigeria is a product of Norther political elites and sponsorship from foreign terrorist organizations to propagate Islamic religion. Respondents view also revealed that children are the first destabilized victim during insurgency. Finally, some recommendations were made which if implemented will see to the final burial of this cankerworm in Nigeria.

Key words: Insurgency, terrorism, child, child welfare, Boko Haram.

INTRODUCTION

The security or safety of the people is a critical index to measure governance of any nation. In other words, we tend to consider 'life' first while other indices of development; education, technology, sports and international relations take the back seat. Ogbonna-Nwaogu (2008) observed that most countries in Africa including Nigeria have witnessed series of terrorist attack or insurgencies and armed conflict since the attainment of their independence which have had serious impacts on the lives of the children. According to the author, by the end of the first decade of the post-independence era in Africa, not less than thirty wars and crisis ridden situations in the form of terrorism or insurgencies have been recorded in Africa with many lives lost including children. Some of the countries in Africa that have had the ugly experiences includes; Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Libia, Senegal, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau. It is also necessary to recall that in 1998, Osama Bin Laden declared a holy war against American and the Jews. According to the Economist (2002), two years before Osama Bin Laden launched an attack against the twin tower in U.S., Al-Qaeda killed more than 200 people in and around America embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. It is likely that these quarrels or attack may have emanated as a result of such factors like legitimacy of rulers or people in authority, resources control, marginalization of a particular sections, ethnic differences, political ideologies, religious interest or other reasons.

In 2009, the Boko Haram insurgency came up in Nigeria as a Jihadist rebel group. The group launched an armed attack against the government and people of Nigeria resulting to the death of over

10,849 Nigerians including children by the end of 2014 (Ibeleme, 2014). The activities of the group later spread to other neighbouring nations of Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Republic of Benin and thus assumed a regional dimension. Children have always been the target and object of attack of the group which have occurred in the form of execution or target killings, abduction, sexual violence and forced recruitment of these children into the group (Eikhomun, 2014). The situation creates the impression that Nigeria is at war with itself. According to Igiebor (2011:16) “since the inception of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, terror is walking tall on the streets and the nation is fast moving towards the Hobbesian State of nature where life is brutish, nasty and short”. The author also remarked that generally for Nigeria, it seems some evil men are tugging at the seams of the nations garment of unity with a view to rendering it into shreds. A nation where the lives of the young ones are not guaranteed is automatically going into oblivion.

However, Max Gluckman; a South African born Anthropologist argued that some crisis or actions in modern societies are like rituals of rebellion which lead to the affirmation of the general principles of the impossibilities of reconciliation of different interests. According to Gluckman (1947) this is a cynical point of view. It is against this background that this paper attempts to examine the unmitigated impact of terrorism or insurgency on welfare of the African child with special reference to Boko Haram, insurgency in Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the recent time, the rising profile of death and other forms of casualties among children in Africa especially in Nigeria and other parts of the world has become a matter of great concern. According to Rourke (2008), terrorism or Insurgencies and other forms of armed conflict/violence have become more threatening today than ever before as civilian casualty especially children has been on increase. In other words, children seem to be the potential target group of the terrorist attack which manifests in different shades of abduction, sexual slavery, suicide bombers, rape and others. This however may differ from a country to another (Ogbonna-Nworgu, 2008). Eikhomun (2014) noted that the abduction of over 200 female secondary school students from Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok, Borno State in the North East Nigeria on April 14, 2015 has elicited consternation all over the world.

Over the years, the Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, the Hezbollah; the Lebanese Militant group sponsored by Iran and other Arab terrorist organizations have gained foothold in Nigeria recruiting several young men and children as foot soldiers (Akinkuotu, 2011). This may have been the extension of the War declared against American and the Jews by Osama Bin Laden in 1998 which led to the September 11, 2001 bombing of the world Trade centre and the pentagon which claimed about 3,000 lives. The infiltration of these foreign terrorist organization into Nigeria which gave rise to Boko Haram is now a turn in the flesh of Nigerians.

Ajayi (2015) noted that terrorism or Insurgency apart from exposing the inadequacies of the combat readiness of the Nigerian Military to respond professionally and adequately in securing the territorial integrity of the nation poses a challenge to the social development policy of the nation. The social development policy of Nigeria (1998) stresses on the overall wellbeing of Nigeria children as its cardinal target on the conviction that it is firmly rooted in various culture of the people. This is the major thrust of this study. Since any nation striving towards development must consider the welfare of its future leaders (the children), the study examined the issue of global terrorism or Insurgency and the welfare of the African child using the Boko Haram insurgents in Nigeria as a reference point.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was guided by the following research questions

- (1) what are the key factors accountable to the emergence of Boko Haram and other terrorist organizations in Nigeria?
- (2) what are the roles of the African child?
- (3) what are the major threats posed unto the welfare of the Nigerian child under Boko Haram Insurgency?

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The general objective of the study was to examine the impact of terrorism or insurgency on the welfare of the African child using the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria as a point of reference.

Specifically, the following objectives were identified.

- (1) To identify the factors accountable to the emergence of Boko Haram and the terrorist organization in Nigeria.

- (2) To assess the roles of the African child.
- (3) To ascertain the major threats posed unto the welfare of the Nigeria child under Boko Haram Insurgency.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of factors underlying the Emergence of Boko Haram in Nigeria

Boko Haram came into existence in 1960s but only started to draw attention in Nigeria in 2002 when Mohammed Yusuf became its leader with its headquarter in Maiduguri, Borno State (Ishaya, 2011). According to the author, the term Boko Haram came from the Hausa word 'boko' meaning 'Animist, western or otherwise non-Islamic education and the Arabic word 'Haram' figuratively meaning 'sin or forbidden'. In other words, the concept means 'western education is forbidden', if loosely translated from this local Hausa language. Ishaya (2011) also noted that the official name of the group is Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad, which in Arabic means people committed to the propagation of the prophets teachings and Jihad. Its literal translation is 'Association of Sunnis for the propagation of Islam and for Holy War.

In 2002, the leader of the group; Mohammed Yusuf set up a religious complex, which included a mosque, and an Islamic school. Many poor Muslim families from across Nigeria, as well as neighbouring countries, enrolled their children at the school (Ishaya, 2011). In 2004, it moved to Kanamma, Yobe state where it set up a base called 'Afghanistan' with Abubakar Shakrau assuming its new leader.

Boko Haram became known internationally following sectarian violence in Nigeria in 2009. The group opposes not only Western education but also Western culture and modern science. According to Ugwuoke (2015), this attitude has remained a paradox because while it rejects everything about western civilization, it has increasingly patronized products of modern science and western material culture such as military hardware, and various commodities and skills of communication technology. Moreso, the political goal of the group according to Ishaya (2011) was to create an Islamic state, with the school becoming its recruitment ground for little children as Jihadis to fight that state. The group members were trained only to speak Arabic and avoid mixing up with local people. Agbo (2013) noted that as a result of the volatile religious environment in Nigeria, the Lebanese exploited the Northern Muslims traditional affection for the Arabs to plant their evil intentions in Nigeria as they plot and execute their agenda to destabilize the nation. The author further revealed that the ambivalence displayed by some Northern leaders in Nigeria opened a crack in the country's armour for terrorist organizations from the Middle-East to infiltrate Nigeria under the guise of Pan-Islamic interest. According to him, when the former Nigeria president, Goodluck Jonathan proscribed Boko Haram and officially declared it as a terrorist organization in 2013, some Northern leaders described the decision as anti-North as they claimed that it is part of their culture.

In the view of Suleiman (2011), Boko Haram was believed to have been instituted by political interests, which eventually aided the rise to power of some politicians. When they lost the positions, they searched for a way of keeping their opponents uncomfortable using these forces of destruction.

In July 30, 2009, according to Ishaya (2011), Yusuf was killed by the Nigerian security forces after being taken into custody and since then Nigerians have been in a very serious security risk. Bombs have become the major weapons of their warfare. As Ugwuoke (2015) noted, the gruesome nature of Boko Haram atrocities in Nigeria is better imagined than revealed.

Role of children as future leaders in Africa

The place of children as the future leaders and agent of national development in any society has been widely recognized. According to Danladi (2013), this has made it highly imperative for different countries in the world to codify in their constitutions and legislations; the various rights of children that would guarantee and safeguard their mental and physical development. Similarly, the UNICEF, WHO and other international organizations/governments have advanced laws for protection, development and promotion of all children's rights such as the fundamental rights of the children against exploitation, health rights ie, ensuring comprehensive health care of the child, right for good education, protecting children against abuse of labour as well as improving their general welfare (Akindele, 2013). Akindele (2013) equally revealed that Article 37 of the defunct organization of African Unity (OAU) charter on the rights of the child stipulates that no child should be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment/punishment. According to the Author, Article 24 of the convention on the rights of the child advanced multiple approaches toward the protection of the rights of children. These include, reducing child mortality, combating diseases and malnutrition through the provisions of adequate/clean drinking

water and ensuring that children are informed or have access to the use of hygiene and environmental sanitation.

Significantly, Nigeria is a signatory to all of the above conventions and charters which signals the country's commitment to international efforts to safeguard the wellbeing of children. In realization of this, the social development policy for Nigeria (1989) stated that the national policy in Nigeria flows from a deeply entrenched concern for the overall wellbeing of the child which is firmly rooted in various culture of the people. The policy guarantees for the Nigerian children adequate environment and opportunities for the total development of their capacities to cope with the contemporary living and eliminate all forms of violence that might affect the Nigerian child. This implies that the foundation of the wellbeing of children laid by our founding fathers was one determined to make the Nigerian child great to surpass the ideals of developed economies of Europe, Canada and United States.

However, in the contemporary setting, what is obtainable is injustices, killings, abductions and other forms of violence meted on the so called 'future leaders' by Boko Haram insurgents. The situation has reached a frightening crescendo that requires the collective efforts of all and sundry against this ugly monster. According to Danladi (2013), the insecurity and deplorable conditions of the African child in the present dispensation have brought to futility the realization of the goals of children's welfare and general development programmes initially forwarded by African countries and reinforced by the Bamako initiatives. Apart from that, the United Nations organization in its 1882 resolutions condemns the killing and maiming of children or rape and other violence against children in conflict. The former Secretary General of the United Nations; Ban Kimoon once urged all nations to strike a blow against all forms of impunity and violence against children during conflict or insurgency.

Impacts of Boko Haram Insurgency on Africa child

Insurgency or conflict in whatever forms are likely to affect children in all the same manner as it affect adults. According to Barbara (2006), children are dependent on the care, empathy and attention of adults who love them. However, the attachment of these children are frequently disrupted in times of insurgencies due to loss of parents, extreme pre-occupation of parents in protecting and finding subsistence for the family and emotional unavailability of depressed or distracted parents.

Specifically, the impact of Boko Haram insurgency on the African or Nigerian children could be seen in the following areas;

- **Death/Injuries:** Barbara (2006), noted that in most parts of the world, hundreds and thousands of children tend to die or sustain injuries of various degrees at different points in time as a result of insurgencies or conflicts that erupted in one way or the other. The Reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council of the United Nations released in June 2015 revealed the killing and maiming of about 880 children during the fighting of the international coalition led by the United states of America against the Peshmerga forces and Islamic state of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in 2014. This report also pointed out that in 2008, 679 children (121 girls, 304 boys and 254 of unknown gender) were killed and 505 others (111 girls, 282 boys and 112 of unknown gender) were injured in 498 incidents or cases of insurgencies/conflicts which represented the highest number of documented child casualties since 2008. Similarly, within the period (2008), at least 87 children were killed and 211 injured in improvised explosive devices and suicide attack in Iraq.

The United Nations reports also revealed that in September, 2008, in Salah al-Din, 16 children (5 girls, 11 boys) between the ages of 8-16 years were killed while 8 children (3 boys and 5 girls) were injured in an Iraq Security forces air strike. Similarly, in Sa'diya district, Diyala, 16 boys within 8 years of age were killed by armed elements during Friday prayers in the Musaba Bin Umeir Mosque (UN Reports, 2015).

In Nigeria, Eikhomun (2014) reported that about 76 students of federal Government College, Buni Yadi in Yobe state were murdered in cold blood by the Boko Haram Insurgents and 16 female students abducted. In May 2013, the sect attacked a police barrack in Bama, Borno state and killed 55 persons including children (Ibeleme, 2014). In most cases, many of the injured children seem to have grossly inadequate access to rehabilitation services.

- **Abduction or Coercion as Suicide Bombers**

According to the reports of the Secretary General to the Security Council of the United Nations (2015), at least 1,297 children (685 girls and 612 boys) were abducted in 320 incidents against the Yezidi Community in Sinjar by forces of the Islamic state of Iraq and the Levant. The details of the reports showed that girls above the ages of 12 were separated from their families and either sold in Islamic state of

Iraq and the Levant controlled areas in Iraq and the Syrian, Arab Republic or retained for sexual slavery. However, in some cases, both the boys and girls were allegedly forced to convert to Islam and join the forces of the Islamic state of Iraq and the Levant as suicide bombers.

In Sierra Leone, McKay and Mazurana (2004) revealed that in 2003, the number of girls combatants armed with assault rifles were estimated to be 12,056 or there about. According to them, these children were forced to commit atrocities against their own families and communities, such as beating to mutilation and active participation in the massacre during the Sierra Leonean crisis.

In Nigeria, Eikhomun (2014) revealed that in April 14, 2014, more than 200 school girls of the Government Secondary School, Chibok in Borno State, aged between 16 and 18 years were abducted by Boko Haram insurgents. According to the reports, these girls were about to sit for their final year examination when the school was invaded by the insurgents and that saw the beginning of their nightmare. In other words, the whereabouts of these girls is still unknown. It is likely that some of these girls have been converted to Islam and join the sects operations in handling arms or as suicide bombers while others may have been given out for marriage within or outside members of the sect in Nigeria or other Islamic countries. One can imagine the horrific molestation, hunger, thirst, severe loneliness and harassment they passed or still passing through.

Similarly, in July 9, 2011, a 10 year old Almajiri boy was strapped with a bomb by suspected Boko Haram members and was instructed to proceed toward the Governor of Borno State, Kashim Shetimma while attending a condolence visit in Kotoko residential area of Maiduguri (Ishaya, 2011). The bomb was immediately spotted and the anti bomb squad attached to the Governors Convoy managed to disarm him. The Boko Haram insurgents in 2014 also murdered 51 persons in Konduga, Borno state and abducted 20 young girls.

Finally, Barbara (2006), revealed that there were tens of thousands of children below 18 years serving as militias in about 60 countries of the world.

- **Illness and Rape:** Barbara (2006), opined that conditions for maintenance of the health of children deteriorates in the periods of insurgency or conflicts-nutrition, water safety, sanitation, housing, access to health services etc. In other words, there may be loss of immunity to disease vectors with population movement. Studies have shown that in a vicious circle, malnourished girls grow up to become malnourished mothers who give birth to underweight babies (UNICEF, 2000). This implies that during insurgency, children appear to become the most innocent and vulnerable victims of diarrhea, measles and other illnesses which commonly kills or undermine their physical, psychological and cognitive capacities.

On the other hands, rape which is very common in situation of insurgency may have a lasting physical impacts in sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDs. According to Graca (2001), the adolescent girls seem to be more vulnerable to the situation because they are physically and emotionally less capable of defending themselves. Ogbonna Nwaogu (2006), narrated the story of a 14 year old girl who was raped by about 15 soldiers for a period of 8 months and 8 days during the Congo crisis until she was rescued and brought to the hospital on a stretcher. Inger (1997) is of the view that rape situation by insurgents is not accidental but rooted in the general belief about gender differences which shapes the structural patterns of violence against women.

- **Emotional/Psychological Trauma:** During insurgency, children are exposed seriously to situation of terror and horror leading to post-traumatic stress disorder. This implies that several losses and disruptions in the lives of children in a conflict ridden situation may lead to high rate of depression and anxiety

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of the study was anchored on two prominent theories; multi-factoral theory of social change and differential opportunity theory. The Multi-factoral theory according to Idyorough (2002) tries to explain social phenomenon in terms of a number of factors interacting and contributing concurrently or consecutively with the economic factors preponderating or having an upper hand to cause significant alterations in the social structure of a society over a period of time. This implies that changes in a nations social structure are not to be understood in any single blanket principle rather a multiplicity of social processes is involved and these operate concurrently. In some cases, one factor may only act as a precipitating factor thus setting all others into motion for social change.

In Nigeria, the activities of the Boko Haram sect has been linked to representatives of outside terrorist organizations such as the Al-Quaeda, Hezbolla, Ashaba and other Islamic terrorist groups who may be working for the religious interest of its members in Nigeria. This is coupled with the economic crunch and

unemployment that have raided Nigeria youth. Other factors include, political Marginalization in relation to appointments and sharing of democracy dividends, lack of educational exposure of the young ones using the Almajiri etc. From this analysis, it can be seen that a single factor is not enough to give a perfect explanation on the rise of terrorism or insurgency specially as it applies to Boko Haram terrorist attack in Nigeria.

The differential opportunity theory which was propounded by Richard Cloward and Lyoyd Ohlin in 1960 focuses on the discrepancy between what the lower class juveniles wants and what is available to them. The theory assumes that discrepancies between aspiration and legitimate chances of achievement increases as one descends in the class structure. Cloward and Ohlin (1960) noted that the youths lack of legitimate means to reach cultural goals produces intense frustration and they search for illegitimate means to achieve cultural goals.

In Nigeria, most of our political fathers continue to recycle themselves from one political position to the other until they are dead while the youths are wallowing in abject poverty, unemployment's and frustration. Suleiman (2011) also noted that the Islamic tendencies in Nigeria have taken on a political edge with some Muslims from the North feeling sidelined, as they are no longer accorded the automatic dominance they enjoyed under British Colonialism and Post-Independence Military rule. According to him, it was in the context of Muslim Political decline on national level that Northern Politicians began to raise the banner of sharia and Boko Haram to reinforce their positions. Today, Boko Haram in Nigeria has outgrown its sponsors and networking seriously with International terrorist organizations.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a cross sectorial survey research design which allows for both quantitative and qualitative research instruments in data collections. Firstly, the thirty-six (36) states of Nigeria were clustered into six (6) according to the geo-political zones. Simple random sampling was then used to pick three (3) states (Benue, Enugu and Edo) from the six geopolitical zones and questionnaire administered to 180 respondents (that is 60 respondents each) purposively chosen from different occupational ladder. Data obtained were analyzed using frequency table and simple percentages.

FINDINGS

Based on the analysis of data, the findings of the study revealed that;

Majority of the respondents (68%) confirmed that Boko Haram as a terrorist organization in Nigeria emerged as a result of religious interest displayed by some foreign nations especially Middle East and political interest of some Northern elites who wants to wrestle power at all cost. In addition, 93% of the respondents upheld that an average Nigerian child or Africa in general is a potential propeller of national development and should be treated with dignity. Finally, respondents view however confirmed that children both in Nigeria and other African countries have been the most vulnerable during Insurgency or terrorist attack which ranges from death and injury, rape, coercion as suicide bombers and other casualties.

CONCLUSION

With terrorism or Insurgency and other forms of armed conflict and violence pervading lives and every aspects of society in the contemporary world, it becomes clear that the future of most African children especially in Nigeria are hanging in the balance. All along, various governments in Nigeria have been helpless or have displayed their inadequacies in proffering the final remedy to the Boko Haram attack in Nigeria irrespective of the governments carrot and stick approach.

This study have made attempt to explain the impact of the activities of terrorism or Insurgency on the Welfare of the African child using the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria as a case in point. Here, the potential factors underlying the emergence of this sectarian group were pointed out, and recommendations made in order to foster a positive wellbeing in the lives of children in Africa and Nigeria in particular. This is because in Nigerian and Africa in general, children are seen as leaders of tomorrow, protectors and developers who carry the destiny of their countries in their shoulder.

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