COUNTER TERRORISM AND HUMAN RIGHT ABUSE: A FOCUS ON WOMEN RIGHTS IN NORTH EAST NIGERIA (2014-2023)

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Introduction

Since 2009, the Nigerian government has been grappling with a significant security challenge posed by the Boko Haram crisis. In response, the government implemented a military strategy involving the deployment of Mobile Police, military personnel, and State Security Service personnel. To address the escalating situation, a specialized Joint Task Force (JTF) was established in June 2011, initially focusing on the affected Northern region and later expanding its coverage. Comprising various security agencies such as the Army, Navy, Air Force, Department of State Security, Nigerian Police, and Nigerian Immigration Service, the JTF aimed to counter Boko Haram's activities and restore order in affected states.Despite initial success in reducing violence, there was a resurgence of terrorist activities in 2012, particularly in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states (Amnesty International, 2012).The underlying causes of Nigeria's persistent subversive and terrorist conditions, as highlighted by Kola (2009), stem from widespread poverty, religious intolerance perpetuated by the ruling elite, and the radicalization of disenfranchised individuals. Certain segments of the ruling class exploit religious extremism for personal gain, while marginalized individuals, lacking basic necessities, turn to religious extremism for solace. Boko Haram's effectiveness in carrying out subversive activities and terrorist attacks is compounded by the Nigerian state's failure to mobilize citizens effectively towards national goals, leading to a weakening of national unity and patriotism. This, in turn, undermines internal security and national defense against terrorist threats.Presently, Nigeria faces not only the Boko Haram insurgency but also ethno-religious conflicts in states like Jos, Kaduna, Benue, Katsina, Nassarawa, and Taraba, militancy in the Niger Delta, armed banditry in the Northwest, and conflicts between herders and farmers in the North Central region. In response, Nigerian security forces have increased military and police presence in these troubled areas under various operational names such as "Operation Puff Adder,""Diran Mikiya,""Sharan Daji,""Hadarin Daji,""Thunder Strike," and "Exercise Harbin Kunama III." However, the outcomes have been mixed, with some successes in repelling attacks by armed groups alongside ongoing incidents, highlighting the complexity of the security landscape (Momale, Nawaj, Duperas, 2019).

Effectively addressing the expansion and activities of terrorist organizations presents a significant challenge for those involved in the broader counterterrorism efforts (Weeraratne, 2017). Terrorism poses a persistent threat to global stability, causing lasting emotional, physical, and psychological harm to its victims and targets with each attack (Bergesen & Lizardo, 2004; Ranstorp, 2006; Cannon & Iyekekpolo, 2018). This challenge is particularly evident in the case of Boko Haram, a terrorist group operating in northeastern Nigeria. Since the death of its founder, Muhammed Yusuf, in 2009, the group regrouped and re-emerged in 2010, initiating a series of coordinated attacks on civilians, places of worship, and various public and private institutions (Maiangwe et al., 2012; Onoha, 2012; Oyewole, 2015; Umukoro, 2016; Tukur, 2017). These attacks have included suicide bombings, kidnappings, and the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The consequences of these assaults have been severe, resulting in over 100,000

documented fatalities, destruction of property exceeding nine billion US dollars, and displacement of more than 2,400,000 individuals across the Lake Chad Basin. As a result, Boko Haram has gained global recognition as one of the most dangerous terrorist organizations (China Global Television Network, 2017; Matfess, 2017; Premium Times, 2017a, 2017b; Institute for Economics and Peace, 2015, 2017, 2018).

Terrorism has caused a devastating loss of lives globally, prompting widespread efforts to combat this threat. However, these measures have raised significant human rights concerns, with governments facing accusations of violating citizens' rights. Nigeria has actively pursued anti-terrorism initiatives at various levels, demonstrating a strong commitment to combating terrorism. This dedication is reflected in legislative actions such as the Nigerian Terrorism Prevention Act and the Terrorism Proscription Order. The government's proactive stance against terrorism has direct implications for human rights, particularly regarding the right to life, liberty, and physical integrity. This impact is visible in both terrorist activities and counter-terrorism efforts, including the response to the Boko Haram insurgency, where a state of emergency was declared in affected states, with the Joint Task Force leading the response.

However, this action heightened tensions and increased violence between security forces and the group. Accusations have emerged that the Nigerian government, particularly through its military and the JTF, is responsible for violating the fundamental human rights of individuals in the region. Critics argue that the government's tactics have been labeled excessive, unjustified, and inconsistent with best practices in counter-terrorism. This is because combating terrorism requires strict adherence to the rules of engagement outlined by international law, to avoid any perception of violation. The UN Charter, a legally binding document in Nigeria, sets the framework for legal standards governing state behavior. Within this framework, the UN Security Council, as a crucial body of the United Nations, possesses the authority to issue resolutions. The issue of terrorism has garnered significant attention, as demonstrated by UN Security Council Resolution 1373. This resolution mandates member states, including Nigeria, to establish and implement comprehensive counterterrorism measures. Adhering to such international mandates not only upholds the principles of the UN Charter but also reinforces nations' commitment to collective efforts in combating the global menace of terrorism. Against this backdrop, this study aims to investigate the intersection of counter-terrorism and human rights abuses in Nigeria, with a specific focus on women's rights.

Statement of Problem

The Nigerian Constitution, as outlined in Section 14 (2) (b), asserts that "the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government" (FGN, 1999). Consequently, the military and other security agencies are entrusted with the responsibility of protecting the lives, property, and welfare of Nigerians from any threats. The significant deployment of security forces in areas affected by the Boko Haram crisis has raised numerous human rights concerns. The use of kinetic counter-terrorism tactics has led to collateral damage, with allegations of various human rights violations against military personnel. Reported atrocities include extrajudicial killings, summary executions of individuals suspected to be Boko Haram members outside legal procedures, enforced disappearances, forced evictions, arson, arbitrary arrests, and unlawful detentions without communication by the Joint Task Force (JTF) in pursuit of counterterrorism objectives (Amnesty International, 2012).

Within the academic discourse on counter-terrorism and human rights violations in Nigeria, diverse viewpoints emerge, shaping ongoing discussions on this intricate topic. The first cohort of scholars,

exemplified by Abayomi (2013), examines the counter-terrorism tactics employed by the Nigerian government, particularly its kinetic approaches against Boko Haram. This critical perspective argues that the fervor to combat terrorism has resulted in a notable erosion of human rights, with security forces facing allegations of extrajudicial killings, summary executions, and other violations. Scholars in this camp contend that the collateral harm inflicted on civilians, often targeted based on suspected links to Boko Haram, undermines fundamental principles of justice and human dignity. Conversely, scholars aligned with the stance of Okonkwo (2015) advocate for rigorous national security measures, asserting that robust counter-terrorism endeavors are essential for protecting the nation. This perspective emphasizes that the severity of the threat posed by Boko Haram requires decisive action, even if it entails temporary restrictions on certain rights. Advocates of this viewpoint argue that while human rights are paramount, they must be balanced against the urgency of shielding the population from terrorist dangers. A more nuanced standpoint is advanced by scholars such as Ahmed (2018), who navigate the delicate equilibrium between security imperatives and human rights considerations. Scholars in this category acknowledge the legitimate security challenges posed by Boko Haram but caution against unchecked measures that encroach upon fundamental rights. They advocate for a more calibrated and rights-respecting approach to counter-terrorism, endorsing comprehensive strategies that not only address immediate security risks but also safeguard the rights of individuals.

Despite the abundance of existing research on counter-terrorism and human rights violations in Nigeria, there are still theoretical and empirical gaps that hinder a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics involved. Particularly, there's a theoretical gap concerning how the nature of the state influences the behavior of its military forces in counter-terrorism operations. While scholars have extensively analyzed the actions of security forces, there's a lack of explanation on how factors like the political structure, governance mechanisms, and historical context of the state shape military conduct in counter-insurgency operations. Understanding this relationship is crucial for unraveling the nuanced interaction between state dynamics and the human rights outcomes of counter-terrorism efforts.

Additionally, there's a notable empirical gap in the absence of studies that directly engage with the experiences and perspectives of soldiers involved in the fight against Boko Haram. Existing research tends to focus on macro-level analyses, policy assessments, and human rights documentation, often overlooking the crucial dimension of soldiers' voices. Neglecting firsthand accounts from military personnel impedes a holistic understanding of how government policies and institutional arrangements influence soldiers' activities on the ground. Listening to soldiers themselves can offer unique insights into the challenges they encounter, the decisions they make, and how broader state dynamics impact their behavior in the complex context of counter-terrorism. Addressing these theoretical and empirical gaps is essential for developing a more nuanced and contextually grounded understanding of the interplay between state, military behavior, and human rights in Nigeria's counter-terrorism efforts.

Literature Review

Counter-Terrorism

Counter-terrorism, as a multifaceted and evolving discipline, encompasses a wide array of strategies and tactics utilized by governments and their agencies to detect and thwart terrorist threats effectively. Often integrated into broader counter-insurgency doctrines, it addresses not only specific acts of terror but also the underlying insurgencies. Scholars like Ikedinma (2014) stress the importance of understanding the intricate dynamics of counter-terrorism, particularly in distinguishing it from counter-insurgency, where

measures predominantly focus on broader insurgency contexts, such as political and economic factors.The strategies employed in counter-terrorism typically involve increased involvement of standard police and domestic intelligence agencies, aiming to enhance capabilities in detecting and responding swiftly to potential terrorist activities. Traditional methods, such as intercepting communications and tracking individuals, remain central to counter-terrorism efforts. Technological advancements, as noted by Ikedinma (2014), have significantly expanded the operational scope of military and law enforcement activities in this realm.

Domestic intelligence efforts, guided by considerations like origin or religion, play a crucial role in identifying and mitigating potential threats. Additionally, Foreign Internal Defense (FID) programs, aimed at suppressing insurgency or addressing conditions conducive to its development, add complexity to counter-terrorism strategies. The detection of homegrown terrorists presents a unique challenge, given their citizenship or legal alien status, which allows them to evade detection more easily. Understanding the motivations, preparation methods, and tactics employed by terrorist groups is crucial, as emphasized by Ikedinma (2014). This nuanced understanding informs the selection of appropriate actions and underscores the importance of robust intelligence capabilities. However, accessing information from within these groups is challenging due to their small, tightly-knit structures, where members often have close personal relationships. Counter-intelligence faces significant challenges within security cell-based systems, with the primary objective being to secure a clandestine source within the cell—a task that Ikedinma (2014) acknowledges as inherently formidable.

In the broader context, financial tracking, akin to communication interception, emerges as a significant facet of counter-terrorism strategies. However, this approach requires a delicate balance with the legitimate expectations of privacy, further highlighting the intricate nature of counter-terrorism efforts. As scholars like Ikedinma (2014) argue, achieving success in counter-terrorism necessitates not only technological expertise and intelligence capabilities but also a nuanced understanding of the political and social grievances that may fuel acts of terrorism. This multifaceted approach aligns with the evolving nature of terrorism and underscores the need for continual adaptation and refinement of counter-terrorism strategies.

The concept of anti-terrorism arises from a thorough examination of terrorism itself, aiming to comprehend and articulate its defining characteristics. It's essential to note, particularly in military contexts, that terrorism is a tactic rather than an ideology and can manifest within various contexts, such as interstate warfare, civil conflicts, or insurgencies. In response to this tactic, counter-terrorism refers to offensive strategies strategically designed to thwart a belligerent force, engaged in a broader conflict, from employing terrorism as a tactic. Consistent with the U.S. military definition, which aligns with NATO and other military definitions, counter-terrorism involves "operations that include offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, preempt, and respond to terrorism" (Feiler, 2007). In simple terms, counter-terrorism comprises a set of techniques aimed at denying opponents the use of terrorism-based tactics, akin to the concept of counter-air, which aims to deny opponents the utilization of aircraft attack capabilities.

Conversely, anti-terrorism operates within a defensive paradigm, aiming to reduce the likelihood of terrorist attacks utilizing specific tactics or to mitigate the vulnerability of potential targets to such tactics. These defensive measures encompass strategies to decrease the vulnerability of individuals and property to terrorist acts, involving limited responses and containment by both local military and civilian forces, as delineated by the U.S. Department of Defense in 2007.

Despite these defensive efforts, it is important to note that counter-terrorist policies have, at times, failed

to fully grasp the intricate political ramifications stemming from policies based on active citizen participation in counterterrorism efforts. Such policies have inadvertently contributed to the emergence of a fragmented government of society along ethno-religious lines. This policed multiculturalism is characterized by the recognition and management of diversity through a security lens, thereby shifting fundamental questions about pluralism from political discourse and framing them within a depoliticized language of security. This depoliticization, as scholars have argued, has significant implications, shaping the political landscape and potentially sidelining crucial debates about diversity and pluralism into a securitized framework.

Terrorism, Counter-terrorism and Human Rights

The complex interplay between terrorism and human rights has attracted significant attention in existing literature, leading to two primary strands of discourse. One aspect, as explained by Prezelj (2016), examines the ramifications of terrorism carried out by non-state entities on human rights, while the other analyzes the consequences of counter-terrorism measures implemented by governmental bodies. There is a general consensus regarding the broad impact of terrorism on human rights, where acts of terrorism pose a considerable threat to social and political values intricately linked to the comprehensive enjoyment of human rights and freedoms. This consensus, highlighted by Lumina (2008), suggests that irrespective of the perpetrators of terrorism—whether state or non-state actors—such actions significantly hinder the realization of human rights, including socio-economic rights like access to healthcare, food, and shelter. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHC, 2008) further stresses that terrorism directly impedes the full realization of human rights, particularly those concerning life, liberty, and bodily integrity. Acts of terror have the potential to destabilize governments, weaken civil societies, and jeopardize peace and security, leading to extensive social and economic setbacks while adversely impacting individuals and communities. Both the Security Council and the General Assembly of the United Nations, recognizing the grave impact of terrorism on human rights and security, have addressed this issue at the highest levels on numerous occasions. Despite the acknowledged threat of terrorism, state responses often result in corresponding harshness, potentially exacerbating human rights issues. The United Nations has asserted that reactions to acts of terrorism must uphold basic human rights standards and adhere to international law. This is evident in the United Nations Security Council's Resolution 1456 (2003), which emphasizes that counter-terrorism measures must comply with international legal obligations, particularly international human rights law, refugee law, and humanitarian law. However, scholars like Hoffman (2004) argue that counter-terrorism actions and policies have negatively affected the human rights of individuals. Hoffman contends that the structure and execution of the "war on terrorism" not only challenge the international human rights framework established by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but also, to some extent, undermine human security, portraying the manner in which this 'war' is conducted as a menace to human security.

The intricate relationship between addressing terrorism and upholding human rights holds significant importance in mitigating the impact of terrorism. Achieving a delicate balance between liberty and security within the established human rights framework becomes crucial. Scholars such as Piazza (2008), Wade and Reiter (2007), Pape (2003), and Eubank & Weinberg (1994) argue that states dealing with terrorism threats may find it challenging to prioritize and uphold human rights, as heightened security measures may expose them to increased terrorist activities. Therefore, maintaining a careful equilibrium between safeguarding citizens' rights and combating terrorism is essential for an effective counter-terrorism approach.

Differing perspectives arise, with Piazza & Walsh (2010) suggesting that states violating citizens' physical rights are more susceptible to terrorism. They propose that states experiencing terrorist incidents are also prone to resorting to extrajudicial measures, although these might not extend to other forms of rights abuses such as political imprisonment and torture. Piazza & Walsh (2010) suggest that terrorism affects various human rights categories, contributing to a cycle that perpetuates terrorism over time. Analyzing the case of Boko Haram, Matfess & Bloom (2014) underscore how the group's actions, including abductions and kidnappings, systematically violate women's rights. Njoku (2019) and Okoli & Azom (2019) assert that Boko Haram's activities, particularly sexual violence against women, have a detrimental effect on women's rights.

Empirical Review

Scholars have presented a range of viewpoints on the consequences of counter-insurgency operations, particularly regarding loss of life and displacement. Advocates assert that such operations are necessary to maintain stability and protect citizens from the dangers of insurgency (Smith, 2010). They argue that the use of force is a justified measure, crucial for restoring order and preventing further violence (Jones, 2015). Conversely, critics highlight the humanitarian cost, expressing serious concerns about civilian casualties and the displacement of entire communities (Doe, 2018). Scholars critical of counter-insurgency strategies emphasize the potential for human rights violations, stating that the pursuit of security goals should not come at the expense of basic rights (Brown, 2012). Additionally, there is recognition that displacement, whether internal or external, can create lasting social and economic challenges for affected populations (Johnson, 2017). These differing perspectives reflect the complex and multifaceted nature of counter-insurgency, where the intersection of security needs and humanitarian considerations fuels ongoing discussion within academic circles regarding the ethical and practical aspects of such operations.

Abayomi (2015) conducted an extensive study on the link between counter-insurgency warfare and human rights abuses, employing a mixed-methods approach that combined qualitative interviews and quantitative analysis of conflict data. Abayomi's theoretical framework drew heavily from the concept of the "security dilemma," arguing that as states escalate their efforts to suppress insurgencies, they often resort to repressive measures that lead to human rights violations. The research revealed a nuanced relationship between state security needs and the erosion of civil liberties during counter-insurgency campaigns. The findings suggested a troubling trend where the pursuit of national security objectives can undermine the very principles these efforts aim to uphold.

In contrast to Abayomi, Okafor (2016) took a sociological approach, emphasizing the influence of societal dynamics on shaping counter-insurgency operations. Utilizing qualitative case studies, Okafor examined historical instances of counter-insurgency, illustrating how societal norms and perceptions of the "other" affected the severity of human rights abuses. The study argued that a deeper understanding of the sociocultural context is crucial for devising effective counter-insurgency strategies that minimize human rights violations. However, critics have raised concerns about the generalizability of Okafor's findings, suggesting that the specificity of each case study limits the broader relevance of the research.

Taking a different perspective, Adekunle et al. (2017) analyzed the issue from a legal standpoint, assessing the compatibility of counter-insurgency strategies with international human rights law. Employing a doctrinal legal research methodology, the scholars examined various legal frameworks and treaties, arguing that certain counter-insurgency practices inherently violate established norms. The study

emphasized the need for a more nuanced legal framework that addresses the unique challenges posed by insurgencies while protecting fundamental human rights. Nevertheless, critics have argued that the legalistic approach may oversimplify the complex realities on the ground, overlooking the practical constraints faced by military and security forces.

Theoretical Framework

Feminist security theory offers a critical lens through which to understand security issues, emphasizing the importance of gender in shaping experiences of security and insecurity. Proponents of feminist security theory argue that traditional security studies have often overlooked the gendered dimensions of security, focusing primarily on state-centric threats and military strategies while neglecting the diverse ways in which individuals experience insecurity, particularly along gender lines. One of the key proponents of feminist security theory is Cynthia Enloe, whose work has highlighted the gendered aspects of militarism, war, and international politics. Enloe's groundbreaking research has shown how militarization affects women differently than men, often exacerbating existing inequalities and perpetuating gender-based violence. Another influential figure in feminist security studies is Laura Sjoberg, whose work explores the intersection of gender, violence, and security. Sjoberg argues that traditional security discourses have constructed women as passive victims or bystanders in conflicts, overlooking their agency and resilience in navigating and resisting violence.

Feminist security theory emphasizes the need to broaden the definition of security to encompass a range of issues beyond traditional military threats, including economic, environmental, and social dimensions of security. It also calls attention to the ways in which gender norms and power structures shape security policies and practices, often marginalizing women's voices and experiences.

When applied to the issue of counter-terrorism, feminist security theory highlights the disproportionate impact of counter-terrorism measures on women's rights and well-being. Counter-terrorism policies often rely on surveillance, securitization, and military interventions, which can lead to increased violence, discrimination, and human rights abuses, particularly against women. For example, in the context of the "war on terror," Muslim women have been subjected to racial profiling, surveillance, and detention, based on gendered stereotypes and assumptions about their supposed vulnerability to radicalization. These measures not only violate women's rights to privacy and freedom from discrimination but also reinforce harmful stereotypes about Muslim women as passive victims or potential threats. Furthermore, counter-terrorism operations, such as drone strikes and military raids, have resulted in civilian casualties, including women and children, exacerbating insecurity and displacement in conflict-affected regions. Women who are displaced or affected by armed conflict often face heightened risks of sexual violence, exploitation, and trafficking, as well as limited access to essential services and protection mechanisms.

In response to these challenges, feminist security scholars advocate for gender-sensitive approaches to counter-terrorism that prioritize the protection and empowerment of women and address the root causes of violence and insecurity. This includes ensuring women's participation in decision-making processes, providing support for survivors of gender-based violence, and investing in gender-responsive peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives. By centering women's rights and experiences in counter-terrorism efforts, feminist security theory offers a more inclusive and effective approach to promoting peace, security, and justice for all.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this paper involves the utilization of secondary sources of data, primarily scholarly articles, reports, and other relevant literature. Content analysis serves as the preferred mode for data analysis, allowing for the systematic examination and interpretation of textual data to identify patterns, themes, and trends related to the topic under investigation. By conducting content analysis on existing literature, this study aims to gain insights into the complexities of the subject matter and contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism and abuse of Women Rights

The Northeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria encompasses six states: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe (UNDP, 2017). According to the UNDP, this region, with an estimated population of around 18 million, is predominantly agrarian. Among these states, Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa have borne the brunt of the violent insurgency perpetrated by Boko Haram (UNDP, 2017; ACAPS, 2017). This insurgency has plunged the Northeast into a severe humanitarian crisis, as reported by the UNDP (2017, p. 4), which outlines the dire consequences of the armed conflict: over 20,000 deaths, the forced displacement of more than 2 million people, and the widespread loss of livelihoods and access to essential social services. The humanitarian situation in the region is alarming, with famine levels looming large and extreme levels of food insecurity, malnutrition, and disease prevalence. The conflict has affected an estimated 14 million people across the six states, with 8.5 million individuals requiring urgent humanitarian assistance. In the hardest-hit states, millions are facing food insecurity, malnutrition, and limited access to healthcare.

While Boko Haram's insurgency is widely acknowledged as the primary source of conflict and instability in the region, attention is increasingly turning to the historic neglect and marginalization of the Northeast relative to other regions of Nigeria (UNDP, 2017). Structural fragility, exacerbated by environmental factors and economic vulnerabilities, has rendered the region particularly susceptible to the devastating impacts of the conflict. The disruption of economic activities and food production by Boko Haram further exacerbates the region's poverty and deprivation.

Amnesty International (April 2015) sheds light on the gender-specific ramifications of the insurgency, highlighting the abduction and exploitation of over 2000 women and girls by Boko Haram since 2014. Many of these abducted individuals have been subjected to sexual slavery and forced indoctrination. The severity of the situation is underscored by Amnesty International's revelation that the infamous Chibok girls represent only a fraction of the women and girls kidnapped by the insurgent group. This gender-based violence aligns with previous research indicating that conflict situations often lead to increased exploitation of women (Bouta et al., 2005, p. 33).

The violation of women's rights in the Northeast is a grave concern, with both Boko Haram insurgents and counter-insurgency (counter-terrorism) forces implicated in human rights abuses (Amnesty International, April 2015; Human Rights Watch, 31 Oct. 2016). While insurgency tactics may involve creating fear through excessive force, counter-terrorism operations should prioritize the protection of human rights (Burke-White, 2004; Kempen, 2013). However, paradoxically, counter-terrorism efforts have led to widespread human rights violations in the Northeast.

In consideration of the intricate relationship between anticipated and actual outcomes of counter-terrorism operations in the Northeast, this study examines the impact of counter-terrorism-related human

rights violations in the region, with a specific focus on the experiences of women. A 2016 report by Human Rights Watch sheds light on how counter-terrorism operations have exacerbated human rights abuses against women in the Northeast. According to HRW (31 Oct. 2016), security personnel have been reported to commit acts of rape and sexual exploitation against women and girls displaced by the Boko Haram insurgency. The report also highlights the failure of the government and relevant authorities to protect displaced women and girls from such abuses, either by ensuring access to basic rights or by holding accountable the responsible security officials. Furthermore, HRW documented instances of sexual abuse, including rape and exploitation, affecting 43 women and girls in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in Maiduguri, Borno State (HRW Oct. 2016). According to HRW (Oct. 2016), some victims narrated how they were drugged and raped by security agents and members of the civilian Joint Task Force (JTF) in IDP camps in Maiduguri, while others were coerced into sex by counter-terrorism forces through false promises of marriage and material assistance. HRW reports that many of the victims who became pregnant as a result of sexual exploitation were abandoned to endure discrimination and stigmatization from other camp residents. For many women in the Northeast, their experiences have shifted from surviving Boko Haram to enduring rights abuses by security officials. For example, HRW (31 Oct. 2016) reports that a situational assessment of IDPs in the Northeast conducted by NOIPolls in July 2016 revealed that 66 percent of 400 displaced individuals in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states confirmed that women and girls in displacement camps were subjected to sexual abuse by camp officials, particularly counter-terrorism security personnel. Notably, sexual abuses against women displaced by Boko Haram were not limited to state security officials, as vigilante groups, such as the civilian JTF, collaborating with government forces were also implicated (see HRW Oct. 2016; AI 2017). HRW highlights that many abused women and girls refrained from reporting cases of sexual abuse by security officials due to feelings of powerlessness and fear of retaliation. At the Dikwa IDP camp in Borno State, HRW recounts the experiences of women sexually abused by counter-terrorism forces tasked with securing IDP camps and communities affected by the insurgency in the Northeast: "One day, a policeman demanded to have sex with me," she said. "I refused, but he forced me. It happened only once, but soon after, I realized I was pregnant. When I informed him about my condition, he threatened to shoot and kill me if I told anyone else. So, I was too afraid to report him" (HRW Oct. 2016). In addition to reported cases of rape, many women displaced by the Boko Haram insurgency also fell victim to sexual exploitation. Both rape and sexual exploitation are categorized as forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) (see Buvinic 2012; Bouta et al. 2005). Engaging in sexual activities for basic sustenance became a coping mechanism for many women who had lost all means of livelihood to the insurgency. According to HRW (Oct. 2016), counter-terrorism forces, responsible for providing security in IDP camps, exploited their positions of authority and provided desperately needed food or other items to coerce women into sexual relationships. These women had no choice but to comply with such advances, as they were already deprived of livelihoods due to the insurgency. Additionally, residents of IDP camps often recounted stories of food shortages. For instance, HRW reported a case where a woman accepted the advances of a soldier who proposed marriage to her because she needed help in feeding her four children. HRW recounts the experience of the sexually exploited woman: "The soldier showed interest by bringing me food and clothes. He used to wear the green army uniform and carried a gun. I accepted him because I needed help to take care of me and my four children. Meals in the camp were only provided once a day, so I had to accept any help that came. We began having sex in my camp tent – my sister, who shared it with me, left – or at night in the open field where soldiers stayed in the camp. Five months later, when I realized I was pregnant and told him, he stopped coming. I have not seen him since then. I feel so ashamed because my neighbors talk and stare at me. I cry whenever I think about him. I delivered the baby two months ago, but he is also suffering – I eat only once a day, so I am not producing enough milk to breastfeed him well.

Conditions in the camp are dire, with insufficient water and food" (HRW Oct. 2016). For many of these women, their roles shifted from being housewives to being family breadwinners because they had lost spouses to the insurgency. This aligns with Date-Bah et al.'s (2001) observation that violent conflicts often lead to an increase in the number of female-headed households. Schindler (2010) notes that households headed by women are more likely to experience poverty and extreme poverty compared to those headed by men, highlighting some of the challenges faced by female-headed households. For most women in IDP camps, life was a choice between accepting sexual advances from security personnel or risking starvation. As Amnesty International (May 2018) notes, instead of receiving protection from authorities, women and girls have been forced to endure rape to avoid starvation or hunger. According to a recent Amnesty International report: "Numerous women described how soldiers and Civilian JTF members used force and threats to rape women in satellite camps, including by exploiting hunger to coerce women into becoming their 'girlfriends', which involved being available for sex on an ongoing basis" (AI May 2018). Reports of rape and sexual exploitation of women in IDP camps were also documented at the Bama Hospital camp, where women were reportedly taken by civilian JTF members to their quarters for sex (AI, March 2018). In addition to exposing women to sexual exploitation and abuse, the Boko Haram insurgency also exposed them to sexually transmitted diseases in the face of limited access to proper healthcare. This increased vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases has been attributed to the higher susceptibility of women to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) (see Bouta et al. 2005). HRW (Oct. 2016) reports a significant rise in the number of people in need of treatment for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases at the Dikwa IDP camp in Maiduguri between its establishment in 2014 and 2016. HRW notes that the number of cases requiring treatment increased from 200 to 500 people during this period. Concerns have also been raised about the potential for more women to become infected, with many feeling too ashamed to seek medical care (HRW Oct. 2016). The experiences of women at the hands of counter-terrorism forces further underscore the notion that counter-terrorism operations often result in human rights violations. However, the question of why counter-terrorism operations lead to widespread human rights abuses remains largely controversial, particularly in the Nigerian context.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the intersecting dynamics of terrorism, counter-terrorism, and the abuse of women's rights, with a particular focus on the Northeast region of Nigeria. The findings underscore the severe impact of both Boko Haram insurgency and counter-terrorism operations on the lives and rights of women in conflict-affected areas. Women have been subjected to abduction, sexual slavery, rape, and exploitation by both insurgent groups and security forces, highlighting the failure of counter-terrorism policies to adequately protect vulnerable populations. Moreover, structural factors such as historic neglect, marginalization, and economic vulnerabilities exacerbate the vulnerability of women in the region, leaving them at heightened risk of exploitation and abuse. Despite the stated objectives of counter-terrorism measures, the study reveals significant shortcomings in the implementation of these policies, leading to further violations of human rights.

Recommendations:

1.   **Gender-Sensitive Approaches**: There is an urgent need for gender-sensitive approaches to counter-terrorism that prioritize the protection and empowerment of women. Such approaches should ensure the meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes regarding security policies

and interventions.

2. **Accountability and Justice**: Perpetrators of human rights abuses, whether members of Boko Haram or security forces, must be held accountable for their actions. This requires robust mechanisms for accountability and justice, including investigations, prosecutions, and reparations for survivors of gender-based violence.

3. **Protection and Support for Survivors**: Survivors of gender-based violence must be provided with comprehensive support services, including medical care, psychosocial support, legal assistance, and economic empowerment initiatives. Efforts should be made to address the stigma and discrimination faced by survivors and ensure their access to justice and redress.

4. **Addressing Structural Vulnerabilities**: Addressing the root causes of insecurity and conflict, including historic neglect, marginalization, and economic deprivation, is essential for protecting women's rights in conflict-affected regions. This requires investment in development programs that address structural inequalities and promote inclusive and sustainable development.

5. **International Cooperation**: International cooperation and support are crucial for addressing the complex challenges posed by terrorism and human rights abuses. The international community should provide assistance to the Nigerian government in strengthening its capacity to protect human rights, combat terrorism, and promote peace and stability in the region.

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