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**The Role of the Mass Media in the Fight against Terrorism
and the Instrumental Use of Women in Boko Haram
Insurgence in Nigeria**

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Abstract

Religious conflict, as one of the endemic problems in Nigeria that has led to the death of many in the country, is not new to Nigerians. What is worrisome to many Nigerians in the case of Boko Haram insurgence is its targeting and abuse of women and girls which is a violation of human rights. This raises the question of whether this aspect of Boko Haram's activities is a form of Gender-Based-Violence (GBV) or is the victimisation and kidnapping of women and girls just a tactic within Boko Haram's strategy? This study, therefore, set out to examine the activities of Boko Haram, provide sufficient evidence of a shift by Boko Haram to include women and girls in its terrorism in Nigeria and to suggest the strategies the mass media could adopt in combating this form of GBV. Using case study as research design, data for the study were collected from a variety of sources including the print and electronic media. Interview schedule was also employed as research instrument. The major observation of this study is that the mass media have an enormous role to play if Boko Haram's tactic of including women and girls in their activities is to be combated. The study, thus, concluded that, to effectively address the problem of this form of GBV in Nigeria, the media have to brace up to the task of uncovering cases

of GBV by the Boko Haram sect and following them up in the law court, regularly reporting and giving prominence to the reportage of cases of GBV, organizing debates on the issue of GBV by way of agenda setting and carrying out in-depth analyses of issues concerning GBV in fuller appreciation of their watch-dog role.

Key words: Media, Religion, Role, Conflict, Gender-Based-Violence, Boko Haram

Background to the Study

The Boko Haram is an Islamic religious sect and a terrorist group in Northern Nigeria that believes that Nigeria is ruled by non-believers, even when Nigeria had a Muslim President. The sect opposes Western education and democracy and uses violence, killings and bombings to achieve its goal of establishing a fully Islamic Nigerian State driven by the ideology of a fanatical Islamic practice. For Boko Haram insurgents, Nigeria should be a fully Islamic state where drinking of alcohol, prostitution, drug dealing, etc. will be forbidden. The Boko Haram sect believes that a secular government is wrong and that anything pertaining to westernization is wrong and against the teachings of Islam. The war against federal government and society is believed to be a holy Jihad by the deadly sect. According to Aghedo (2013), ‘it pursues the Islamisation of Nigeria, notwithstanding the nation’s secularity, and it repudiates democracy and Western education, especially the Darwinian theory of evolution.’

The sect is officially known as *Ahlusu nna wai’jama’ah hijra* or “people committed to the propagation of the Prophet’s teachings and Jihad”. The name Boko Haram was given to the group by the residents of Maiduguri in Bornu State where it originated in Nigeria and it literally means ‘Western education is evil’ in the Hausa language. The terrorist group, according to Aghedo (2013), claims to have over 40,000 members in Nigeria and some neighbouring African countries, such as the Republics of Chad and Benin, and Niger Republic, as well as in faraway Somalia and Mauritania. The members of this sect include students of tertiary institutions in Bornu, Yobe and Damaturu, Islamic clerics, professionals and some drop-outs, many of whom are unemployed. Some members of the state security agencies, according to Aghedo, are also members of the sect that help the group with training.

Members of this terrorist group pay daily levies of One Hundred Naira each which approximated to 400,000 Naira daily to their leaders. The Almajiri system, it is believed, facilitated this mobilisation. This daily levy, as Aghedo also notes, provides Boko Haram’s basic source of funding in addition to loot from attacks on banks and donations from politicians, government officials and organisations within Nigeria. It has also been alleged that the sect secures financial support from outside the country. For instance, in 2007 Mohammed Yusuf (The group’s leader) and

Mohammed Bello Damagun (a Muslim cleric who supposedly belonged to the 'Nigerian Taliban') were arraigned in Abuja Federal High Court for receiving monies from al-Qaeda operatives to recruit and train terrorists in Nigeria. There have also been allegations that two former military Heads of State and an ex-civilian Vice-president from the North sponsor the group.

The origin of Boko Haram can be traced to the teachings of Maitatsine Mohammed Marwa who also opposed Western education system by the colonial masters when the Sokoto caliphate was conquered in 1903. Mohammed Marwa, who died in 1980 following Maitatsine disturbances, left literatures that give deadly backing to the Boko Haram sect. The Boko Haram group was, however, founded in Nigeria in 2002, in Maiduguri by Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf, a radical Islamic cleric who was killed in controversial circumstances in July 2009 riot by men of the Nigeria Police Force. After his demise, Mallam Sanni Umaru became the acting leader. Since then, according to Zenn and Pearson (2014), several persons have claimed to be the leader of the group at various times. Currently, Mallam Abubakar Shekau is the spiritual head of the sect, while its spokesman is Mallam Abul Qaqa who once boasted thus:

We have hundreds that are willing to sacrifice their lives in this crusade. The unfortunate incident of Saturday will not discourage us; if anything it will encourage us to strategize and diversify our techniques because we are not afraid of death.

In 2004, the terrorist group moved to Kanamma, Yobe State, where it set up a base called "Afghanistan ". The sect carried out activities such as attacking police outposts, killing police officers, being hostile to democracy and the secular education system. The group also vowed that, "this war that is yet to start would continue for long if the political and educational systems were not changed" (Senam et al. 2013, p. 101). The group, thus, operates under the guise of religion to carry out their nefarious activities such as burning down churches, banks, markets, looting, kidnapping, raping, etc. Aghedo also states that, "the Boko Haram launches attacks at high-profile places such as government establishments, security personnel and stations, markets, banks, shopping complexes, palaces, drinking spots and churches".

The group devises various tactics, styles and weaponry in carrying out its acts of terrorism. Its weapons include cudgels, bows and arrows, cutlasses, guns and bombs. As a result of the violent activities of the group, the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua ordered the deployment of the Military to contain their activities. It was during this operation that Yusuf, the group's leader, was arrested and handed over to the Police and hours later he was executed along with his alleged sponsor, Alhaji Buji Foi, who was the Commissioner for Religious Affairs during the first tenure of former Governor, Ali Modu Sheriff of Bornu State. After his death, his

successor took over from him and continued carrying out the sect's deadly attacks, most of which were bomb blasts. One of the group's ex-member who converted to Christianity in an interview granted to a reporter listed the following as some of the places burnt down by the terrorist group. According to the ex-member:

... our main targets which we succeeded in destroying included: Goodnews & ECWA Churches, Damboa Road, Maiduguri E.Y.N.L.C.C. Wulari, National Evangelical Mission Inc. Divisional Headquarters Wulari, Elijah Apostolic Christ Church, Oke Ayo Celestial Church of Christ, Deeper Life Bible Church, the Lord's Chosen and six others in Railway Area and all over Wulari in Maiduguri, Borno State. Other church buildings we destroyed and looted include the Apostolic Church, COCIN Church, Evangelical Church/Mission Headquarters, Anglican Church, Baptist Church/Mission, Redeemed Christian Church of God, El-Shaddai Parish, Watchman Charismatic and several others.

Apart from bombing churches, markets and other public places, women and girls are abducted, raped and used as cooks and sex partners. Recently, the group has evolved the tactic of using women and girls as instruments for bombing. Boko Haram's tactic of using women and girls as instruments is an act that is against the rights of women and human rights. It can also be said that this is the first time in the history of religious crises in Nigeria that women and girls are used as suicide bombers. Nigerian women and other groups have condemned the act in all its entirety. For instance, various women groups clad in black have urged the Boko Haram group to release, with immediate effect, all the girls abducted during its raids. It is also believed that the media have a major role to play in the fight to contain Boko Haram's use of women and girls as their weapon. It is against this backdrop that this study is embarked upon.

Statement of the Research Problem

Boko Haram's bombings which raise religious tensions in Nigeria have been a matter of concern to all Nigerians. In Nigeria, more than 50 religious crises have been recorded in 30 years in the North and they left political, social, economic and psychological losses and pains in their trail" (*Tell* November 2, 2009, p10). Religious conflicts which have characterized Nigeria since the 1970s are, therefore, not new. What is new in this type of societal problem is the increasingly character of Boko Haram targeting women, kidnapping them and using them as suicide bombers, sex partners, cooks, etc. In a recent analysis of the insurgencies of this sect, women and girls have been recorded as the highest victims. This has become a focus of analysis and the mass media, as the proverbial watch-dog of the society, is expected to provide members with information or reports, interpret events, organize debates,

in the event of any upheaval to curb the insurgency. Having these expectations in mind, this study examines the role the media can play to contain the activities of Boko Haram targeting women, victimizing them, kidnapping and using them as suicide bombers in their terrorist acts.

Objectives of the Study

To achieve the aims of this study, the specific objectives of this paper are as follows:

1. to find out whether women and girls are harassed, abused or abducted by the Boko Haram sect;
2. to find out the category of women targeted at by the Boko Haram terrorist group;
3. to ascertain whether women and girls are used in carrying out Boko Haram activities and
4. to suggest possible strategies the mass media can adopt to contain Boko Haram's form of GBV

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to achieve the above set objectives:

- 1 Are women and girls harassed, abused or abducted by the Boko Haram sect?
- 2 Are certain category of women and girls targeted at by the Boko Haram terrorist group?
- 3 Are women and girls used in carrying out Boko Haram activities?
- 4 What possible strategies can the mass media adopt to contain Boko Haram's form of GBV?

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the Social Responsibility and Social Expectations Theories as the theoretical base of the study. The theories have relevance to this study as they challenge the media practitioner's ingenuity to expose cases of Gender-Based-Violence by creating room for public debates, in-depth analyses of issues and the display of qualities of fairness and responsibility in serving their communities. The theories encourage media practitioners to see themselves as agents in the battle to fulfill certain obligations to society mainly to be met by setting high or professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy,

objectivity, and balance. According to McQuail (2005), the basic principles of Social Responsibility theory, for instance, include the following:

- Media should accept and fulfill certain obligations to society.
- These obligations are mainly to be met by setting high or professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity, and balance.
- In accepting and applying these obligations, media should be self-regulating within the framework of law and established institutions.
- The media should avoid whatever might lead to crime, violence, or civil disorder or give offense to minority groups.
- The media as a whole should be pluralist and reflect the diversity of their society, giving access to various points of view and to rights of reply.
- Society and the public have a right to expect high standards of performance, and intervention can be justified to secure the, or a, public good.
- Journalists and media professionals should be accountable to society as well as to employers and the market.

The relevance of this theory to this study, therefore, is seen in the need for media practitioners to be socially responsible to the community by the way and manner of their reportage of sensitive issues such as GBV since the society has a right to know and expect high standards of performance from every of its sector. In performing their watch-dog role, the media practitioners should realize that they can make or mar a society and as such, should be self-regulating within the framework of law and established institutions and project public good. Social Expectations Theory, on the other hand, heavily focuses on how the presentation of people, social interactions and social problems in the media affect people's expectations and motivate their behaviour. In particular, the portrayal of racial minorities, gender differences and sociological classes has been a matter of concern (Okugo et al. 2012).

An Overview of Terrorism

Terrorists attacks have been reported the world over. In the United States, for example, Watson and Hill (2006) remark that:

On 11 September, 2001 the United States became victim of the most dramatic, daring and devastating act of terrorism with the destruction of the Twin Towers of New York's World Trade Centre by means of

hijacked passenger aircraft, and a similar onslaught on the country's military HQ, the Pentagon (p. 291).

In the New York attack, popularly referred to as the 9/11 attack, according to Senam et al. (2013, p. 99), the terrorists' activities were captured by cameras as they happened. Millions of people across the world witnessed how the most powerful nation in the World was so vulnerable to cruelty and savage acts of terrorists.

Senam et al. (2013, p. 99) also note that the 2008 Mumbai attacks where more than ten coordinated shooting and bombing attacks across Mumbai, India's largest City, by Islamic terrorists from Pakistan took the whole world by storm. The attack which drew widespread condemnation across the world began on November 26, 2008 and lasted until November 29, killing at least 173 people and wounding about 308. The attack was said to have witnessed the display and application of the latest information and communication technology gadgets.

Nigeria is not left out of terrorists attacks as political, ethnic and religious conflicts have formed a fair share of the country's history. It is, thus, estimated that between 1976 and 2009, Nigeria has lost over 100,000 of its citizens to religious crises, while billions of naira has been lost (*Tell* November 2, 2009, p.10).

Terrorism has seriously destabilized Nigeria's values and ways of life. The widespread sense of insecurity to life and property, occasioned by this endemic problem, has become a matter of serious concern to government, security agencies and the Nigerian citizenry at large. The situation has become most critical, consequent upon the apparent helplessness of the law-enforcement agencies to stem the tide of the epidemic (Senam et al. 2013, p. 101). For, instance, on 1st October, 2010, two car bombs exploded near the Eagle Square venue of Nigeria's 50th independence anniversary celebration and killed over 10 people. On the New Year eve, several people were killed by a bomb blast at a bar near a barracks in Abuja, the Federal capital territory. The explosion happened in a market where soldiers and civilians often gather to eat and drink. In December 2010, Boko Haram was blamed for a market bombing, following which 92 of its members were arrested by police. On Friday January 28, 2011, a gubernatorial candidate was assassinated, along with his brother and four police officers. On Tuesday February 8, 2011, Boko Haram gave conditions for peace. The radicals demanded that the Borno State Governor, Senator Ali Modu Sheriff, steps down from office with immediate effect and also allow members to reclaim their mosques in Maiduguri, Borno State capital (Iziguzo, 2007).

In August 25, 2011 the United Nations building in Abuja was bombed leaving many people dead and many others seriously injured. In October 1, 2011 Boko Haram launched Twin bomb blast which claimed 11 lives in Abuja. In Nov. 4,

2011 in Damaturu and Potiskum, Yobe State, Boko Haram Islamic sect launched an attack in which more than 200 people died. In Dec. 25, 2011, Boko Haram attacked St Theresa's Church, Madalla, Niger State, killing several and injuring many. In Jan 20, 2012 in Kano State, Boko Haram's multiple explosions affected ECWA Church and other Churches (See *NewsWatch* November 2, 2009, pp.10-21).

These are indications that Nigeria is not left out in the onslaught of terrorism globally. What is worrisome and new in Boko Haram's terrorism is the tactic of using women and girls as suicide bombers; using them as cooks, sex partners, baits, etc. This act of terrorism has been condemned globally. For instance, in a letter written to President Barack Obama, the women of United States Senate condemned the abduction of Nigerian women and girls. Their letter reads:

As the women of the United States Senate, we are writing to you today deeply disturbed by the abduction and mistreatment of more than 200 girls by the terrorist group of Boko Haram from the Government Secondary School, Chibok, Nigeria. Boko Haram has threatened to sell the girls as slaves and some may have already been sold into child marriages. We condemn these appalling actions in the strongest possible terms, and we agree with you that the abduction of these girls is an outrage. The girls were targeted by Boko Haram simply because they wanted to go to school and pursue knowledge and we believe that the United States must respond quickly and definitively...

In Nigeria, thousands of women have similarly protested and have urged the Boko Haram sect to release all abducted girls during its raid in Federal Government College, Yobe and Chibok. The protesting women carried placards with various inscriptions such as: "Stop the killing of our children"; "God help Nigeria" "Enough is enough of the killings, please"; "Reject the killings in our land".

The women urged government to step in and stop the continuous bloodshed by the sect. Many of the Islamic clerics who have come to criticize the activities of the sect have lost their lives because of that singular action. In February, 2014, for instance, Sheik Adam Albani who contradicted Boko Haram's action was shot to death including his wife and son on their way back from the mosque.

Research Methodology

This work is a descriptive study which employed the case study research design. According to Yin (1994), as cited by Wimmer and Dominic (2006), "a case study is an empirical inquiry that uses multiple sources of evidence to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context." (p.136)

This method was adopted to enable the researcher make use of a wide variety of sources which include newspapers, newsmagazines, journals, dairies, historical artifacts, and other documents, to provide sufficient evidence on Boko Haram and the targeting of women in their terrorist activities.

Results and Discussion of Findings

The data collected from diverse sources are used to answer the research questions raised which are presented and analysed descriptively in this section.

Thematic Analysis

Research Question 1: *Are women harassed, abused or abducted by the Boko Haram sect?*

Boko Haram, an Islamic terrorist group, has since 2013 been involving women in their terrorist operations. In the North Eastern part of Nigeria, Maiduguri in Borno State, to be precise, women took to streets asking for a halt to the activities of the Boko Haram sect. The women comprising Muslim and Christian widows and other concerned women under the auspices of 'concerned mothers' urged for something to be done to put an end to the wanton killings, assaults, rape, abduction and victimization of their children and fellow women. The women lamented that many lives have been claimed, taken and wasted and that many buildings including churches and other properties have been destroyed. One of the respondents interviewed in the course of carrying out this study expressed the view that women have been oppressed to a point where they are treated as if they are a completely different species. They are mentally enslaved to these invisible and faceless agitators (Boko Haram). Countless reports, according to her, have been given of how sixteen children were killed; sometimes how thirty-two teenagers had been kidnapped; and some raped, while others were made pregnant by unknown gun men.

These teenagers are so abused to the extent that they commit suicide out of shame or because of the stigma. The respondent ended by exclaiming that the woes and cries from women in the affected areas of North-Eastern part of Nigeria is indescribable because of Boko Haram insurgency (Ebikienmo, 2013, p. 2). Reports also have it that most attacks launched by Boko Haram have had a direct effect on women as 90% of their casualties have been discovered to be women. Women are abducted after an attack and are taken as slaves or married off as wives to the members of the sect, while others are raped and killed afterwards. Women, according to research, always fall victims because they are the weaker sex and are defenceless. They are abducted to cook for the sect, wash and to be used as sex partners. In February, 2014, for instance, an attack launched by the Military into Boko Haram hideouts revealed that the camp was filled with used condoms and other drug-related

materials. The women and girls captured were also used as baits to lure others into the Boko Haram camp (Okwuokenye 2013, p.6).

The kidnapping of women by the group actually started when the Federal Government arrested the families of Boko Haram suspects. The group's leader, Abubaka, threatened to attack back and kidnap government official's families. According to Barkindo et al. (2013, p. 22) as cited in Zenn and Pearson (2014),

...More than 100 women and children had been detained, among them Shekau's own wives. Also arrested were the wife and children of the commander for Kano, Suleiman Muhammad; the pregnant wife of the commander for Sokoto, Kabiru Sokoto, who gave birth while in prison; and the wife of the suicide-bomber who attacked the 'This Day' media house in Abuja in April 2012 (Zenn and Pearson 2014).

Though, the families of Boko Haram suspects arrested by the federal government were eventually released, Boko Haram had developed a penchant for kidnapping women and girls. Recognizing the severity and escalating situation, President Goodluck Jonathan imposed a state of emergency in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states in May, 2013. Despite the declaration of the state of emergency, there is an increase in rape, torture and murder of women and girls by the sect.

The following are samples of Press reports of Boko Haram issue by *Associated Press*, of 27 January 2012, *The Guardian* of 19 April, 2013 and *Agence France-Presse* of 13 May, 2013, as cited in an article on the Boko Haram by Zenn and Pearson (2014) to prove that women and girls are harassed, abused or abducted by the Boko Haram sect:

Sample one:

Kidnapping is a recent development for the group and the first suggestions of this tactic emerged in Boko Haram statements in January 2012. It was then that the group's leader, Abubakar Shekau, issued a video message threatening to kidnap the wives of government officials in response to the government imprisoning the wives of Boko Haram members (Associated Press, 27 January 2012).

Sample two:

Boko Haram's first actual kidnapping operation was carried out one year later in February 2013, with the abduction of a seven-member French family in northern Cameroon, then brought back to Nigeria (The Guardian, 19 April 2013). The family group included four children (Ibid.). Between February 2013 and May 2013, the kidnapping strategy was brought directly to Nigerian soil, with the abductions of

more than a dozen government officials and their families in Boko Haram's main base of Borno State (Zenn and Pearson, 2014).

Research Question 2: *Are certain category of women and girls targeted by the Boko Haram terrorist group?*

The Boko Haram attack is not only gender-based, but also targeted at Christian women and girls who are often abused, kidnapped, raped and harassed. Reports have it that most of the Boko Haram attacks were targeted at Christian women and girls as narrated by many victims. Many Christian women and girls are forced to convert to Islam and into marriages with knives to their throats. Zenn and Pearson (2014) are of the view that the State of Emergency declared by President Jonathan has manifested in other Boko Haram activities involving women, with a reported increase in GBV against Christian women in northern areas of Nigeria, and increasing levels of sexual violence including rape, torture and also murder. They further quote Barkindo et al. (2013: 17–22) as stating that a recent study reveals that more than 45% of those killed by Boko Haram are Christian women and children. This, Zenn and Pearson (2014), also note appears to be connected with the increased government pressure on Boko Haram in strongholds in northeastern Nigeria, with insurgents abducting Christian women as they flee the security forces. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has also been reporting the abduction of Christian teenagers since July 2013 (Agenzia Fides, 23 July 2013).

Below are samples of excerpts suggesting that Christian women and girls are the actual target of Boko Haram:

Sample Three:

In May 2013, Boko Haram carried out a mass assault on a police barracks in Bama, Borno State in which militants captured 12 Christian women and children (Agence France-Presse, 13 May 2013). This was a prolonged attack, and the abductions followed a fierce battle with security forces in which more than 100 people were killed. On May 7, 2013, Shekau claimed the kidnappings of these 12 women and children in Boko Haram's name. In another video message, he then promised to make these hostages his 'servants' if certain conditions, such as the release of Boko Haram members and their wives from prison, were not met (Agence France-Presse, video, 13 May 2013).

Below is an account of an interview granted to Reuters on November 6, 2013 by a Christian victim, 19- year old Hajja, who escaped from her captors- the Boko Haram insurgents:

Sample Four:

In July, 2013, Hajja, a teenager, was picking corn in Gwoza, which is in the North Eastern region of Nigeria, when the radical Muslim terrorist group, Boko Haram, who controlled that region kidnapped her. One of the men held a knife to her throat and told her he would kill her if she did not convert to Islam. Reuters interviewed Hajja on November 6, 2013 that was after three months of Hajja's captivity in the hands of a fourteen guerilla unit as a slave; cooking and cleaning for them before she escaped. Hajja's account gave a glimpse into how the Islamist terrorists group targeted Christian women and girls, abducted them, raped them, converted them to Islam or killed them. Hajja speaking with Reuters recounted how she watched her captors slit the throat of prisoners who she (Hajja) had helped lure to trap. According to Hajja, a man called Ibrahim Tada Nglayike led the group Hajja was with on one mission, Hajja was sent to stand in a field near the village to attract the attention of civilians working with the army. When five men that approached her were ambushed, they took them back to the cave and tied them up. They cut their throats one at a time. Hajja said "I thought my heart would burst out of my chest, because I was the bait". She ceremonially converted to Islam, cooked for the men, carried ammunition during an attack on a police out post and was about to be married to one of the insurgents before she managed to escape. According to Hajja, "If I cried they beat me, if I talked they beat me. They told me I must become a Muslim, but I refused again and again" Hajja told Reuters.

Luckily, Hajja was able to escape from her captors. From Hajja's account, Christian women are and girls are targeted at; they worked as slaves and sex tools and were forced to convert to Islam. Worse of all they were even married off to the deadly dangerous terrorist group "Boko Haram".

Another report which further proves that Christian women and girls are targeted at by the Boko Haram group is the report by a Christian student of an attack by Boko Haram on her university accommodation in Maiduguri, in August 2013. The men, according to her, were murdered; the women segregated into Muslims and non-Muslims, and the Christian women systematically raped.

Research Question 3: *Are women used in carrying out Boko Haram activities?*

Women have served as a tool with which the Boko Haram group uses to launch their attacks of killing, bombing, rape, etc., on victims. This was the tactic the group adopted in 2013. It is believed that the action of President Goodluck Jonathan's declaration of a state of emergency in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states in May 2013 have had an unintended effect on women, as Boko Haram's men came under pressure and utilized women in weapon smuggling operations around Maiduguri in Borno state. In June, 2013, the civilian joint task, a youth volunteer

group used by the government, found an AK-47, a pistol and multiple IEDs in the garments of each two “shivering” veiled women. Two months later, two women hiding rifles in their clothing were among five suspected Boko Haram militants arrested by the police force. Boko Haram militants are also disguising themselves as women in order to evade arrest. In July 2013 two men dressed as women were killed (Zenn and Pearson 2014). According to Zenn and Pearson (2014),

...2013 marked a significant evolution in Boko Haram’s tactics. Boko Haram carried out a series of kidnappings, in which one of the main features was the instrumental use of women, in response to corresponding tactics by the Nigerian government.

On the reason why women and girls are used in launching attacks, Boko Haram members made it very clear that their abduction of women and girls and their use as instrument was a response to the government’s detention of their own wives and children. This capture of Boko Haram militants’ family members by government was cited as a grievance in almost all Shekau’s video statements in 2012 and 2013. In his first statement after the mass detentions of their family members, Shekau explicitly accused the Nigerian government of “kidnapping” of their women.

When in mid-September 2012, the government of Nigeria detained a further ten women associated with Boko Haram, Shekau responded with his fifth video message. In this video, which was made public on September 30, 2012, Shekau threatened revenge on wives of government officials. He also speculated on the possible sexual abuse of the Boko Haram family members by security forces, when he said ‘...they have continued capturing our women... In fact, they are even having sex with one of them. Allah, Allah, see us and what we are going through’ (YouTube, 30 September 2012). He made clear the intention to target ‘enemy’ women in return, ‘Since you are now holding our women, (laughs) just wait and see what will happen to your own women; to your own wives according to Sharia law’ (Ibid). These events, as Zenn and Pearson (2014) note, demonstrate an established cycle of government detentions of women related to Boko Haram, and the group’s retaliatory abduction of Christian women.

Research Question 4: *What possible strategies can the mass media adopt in containing Boko Haram’s form of GBV?*

Boko Haram, like other terrorist groups all over the world, needs publicity and depends on the media to publicize their messages and goals. There is hardly any terrorist action without the media being involved because of publicity which the media provide. Without involving the media, there would be no effect on a wide audience which the terrorists need. The terrorists always want to communicate their

revolutionary or divine messages to a very wide audience and they have recognized the potentials of mass communication. This is where the media come in. Boko Haram wants attention. They commit violent acts to cause fear, tension and disrupt normal life all in the hope of gaining attention for a course. Without the media, Boko Haram would have a very limited largely local impact. It is the media that spread the terrorist's message and help give it publicity which is a form of communication. The mass media through television, in particular, have proved an effective tool for terrorists because of the images and pictures they broadcast to the public. For instance, in 2013, the sect used the electronic media, the internet, to be precise, to warn the Nigerian government to release their family members, and in several occasions also they have spoken to the government and the Nigerian masses concerning their plans and next line of action. The sect's (Boko Haram) several messages sent through the media to the federal government and society were recorded in video clips of hostages being held by the sect. The sect has also made demands from federal government in threatening modes, through the media. The sect members who are hiding know about the activities of the Government and country through the media. The Nigerian government have also replied through the media for possible dialogue and discovered that they were faceless.

Various scholars have written on the issue of terrorists' use of the media to achieve their goals and objectives. Hoffman (2006, p.174) explains that without the media's coverage, the acts' (terrorist's) impact is arguably wasted and remains narrowly confined to the immediate victim(s) of the attack, rather than reaching the wider 'target audience' at whom the terrorist violence is actually aimed. Nacos (2008) agrees with Hoffman that without massive news coverage, the terrorist acts would resemble the proverbial tree falling in the forest: if no one learned of the incident, it would be as if it had not occurred. The fight against terrorism and the instrumental use of women in Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria would, therefore, be futile in the absence of the media. The mass media have as one of their traditional roles, the dissemination of information. Dissemination of adequate information by the mass media can aid the women to fight for their course and enlighten the public of various forms of violence against women and the girl-child, especially the use of women and girls as instruments of destruction by Boko Haram. According to Mcquail (1961), "the media have the power and ability to shape our opinion and belief, change life habits and actively mould behaviours. The media have already been accused of not under-reporting cases of Boko Haram's use of women and girls as instruments to carry out their acts. This has been credited to the assumption or perception on how women are viewed in the society—as weak, feeble, as well as flimsy in nature.

As the proverbial watch dog of the society the role the media can play in containing the Boko Haram insurgency is very vital. The media can contribute

immensely to the containment and ultimately the defeat of the dangerous Boko Haram sect by reporting current cases of GBV and following up such cases in the law court. They can link up with various women groups, like FIDA, etc., in the fight against GBV. There are many women organizations that have been vocal in this fight— many have carried placards protesting and appealing for the release of the abducted girls. The media should also lend voice to the cries of these women and publicize their activities with the aim of putting an end to this societal problem.

The media can also adopt advocacy journalism that may put an end to the abduction, killings and rape of our girls and women thereby achieving the much needed peace in the society. They can think of the possible ways of bringing the Boko Haram group and government close for possible dialogue that might help in containing the activities of the sect. The media should be involved in the whole thing. They should monitor and give prominence to the activities of this group.

The media can engage in investigative journalism and expose those who are behind this sect; investigate and find out who their sponsors are. We only hear that some politicians are backing the group. But some of the stories are not authenticated. By regularly reporting and exposing them and possible arrest by government, the activities of the sect may be contained. But According to Nacos, the media have failed to play its watchdog role of holding our politicians and other figures responsible in the area of reportage.

There are also indications that the media do not usually play a constructive role that would help in containing the activities of the Boko Haram sect. The media have been accused of wanting to be the first to report the activities of the insurgents and to make the story available as timely and as dramatic as possible. They want to compete in breaking such news without weighting the repercussion that such news may have on the masses or government and have many times yielded to the temptation of promoting conflicts by not being constructive. Of course, bad news is always good news for the media, but in sensitive situations such as this, the media should be more constructive in order to aid the government and the society in the fight against the insurgency, rather than focusing on the episodic and fragmentary accounts of the most irreconcilable differences between the Boko Haram sect and the federal government. This can be seen in some of their negative views, biases, prejudices, stereotypes and inferences which have become issues of news reporting. They amplify and sometimes magnify their activities of the group. The media should, therefore, be constructive, analytical and be able to manage the situation in order to avoid causing unnecessary anxiety, conflict and tension which follow the publications or airing of inflammatory statements by the insurgents. The media coverage of Bombings and explosions, for instance, promote terrorism by stressing fear and uncertain future. On the other hand, the media can also publicize the activities or destructive plans of the sect which they

consider may help or alert government to forestall the sect's future action. Any publicity surrounding a terrorist act, thus, alerts the society that a problem exists and any sensitive government cannot ignore such warning, but should strive to address the problem. The media alerting government would help in containing the activities of the group; therefore, the media should be more constructive in their approach.

The media have also been condemned for making the job of the terrorist to be too easy because of the coverage and the emotion their reports and broadcasts arouse from the public. This is possible by the way the media frame the stories of the sect and its activities. This can either be in choice of words, pictures or the language used in reporting. For instance, some newspapers have streaming headlines that are attention-drawing, but which go to create fears and anxiety on the part of the readers, thus, making the sect successful in their objectives. To contain the Boko Haram insurgency, therefore, the media must apply professionalism. Many journalists have lost their lives in relaying the news of the sect and federal government because they did not apply professionalism. They only succeeded in instigating conflicts and heightening tension, promoting terror and fear which have contributed to killing of innocent people by the sect (Boko Haram). This they do by making inflammatory and inciting statements as presented in most newspaper headlines. Below are some samples of screaming headlines culled from Okugo et al. (2013):

Sample five: "Boko Haram and bomb blasts: Nigeria heading for destruction"

(Culled from *The Nation*)

Sample six: "Boko Haram ready to kill more in Nigeria----why we must continue the bomb blasts says their spokesman."

(Culled from *DailySun*)

Sample seven: Boko Haram: the gridlock of Good luck---we are having a field day"

(Culled from the *Vanguard*)

Sample eight: Bomb blasts on the media---*ThisDay, DailySun*"----why we did it "says spokesman" (Cued from *Radio Nigeria* network news@7pm.)

The media present their reports as they are without any effort at embellishing or doing analytical report or have the patience for investigative journalism. They dish out news flat and straight and at times snippets of sensationalism are found in such reports without minding the repercussions and emotions their reports would arouse in the public. The instinct for survival, according to Okugo et al. (2013), may have contributed to this method of straight jacket reporting against other forms like advocacy journalism.

All in all, the media can wake up and live up to expectation as information disseminator, by making members of the public aware of the nefarious activities and the use of women and girls as instruments by those who claim to be religious hiding under the guise of religion and departing sharply from its tenets to invade and ultimately Islamize the nation and violate our women and girls.

Conclusion

In this study, we have attempted to analyze the role of the mass media in the fight against Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. We discovered that women and girls are harassed, abused or abducted by the Boko Haram sect. We also found out that women are used in carrying out Boko Haram activities and that it is the Christian women and girls that are targeted at by the Boko Haram terrorist group. The findings of this research also suggest that the mass media can adopt certain strategies to contain the Boko Haram insurgency.

Recommendations

In the light of the above findings, this study recommends that, to effectively address the problem of this form of GBV in Nigeria, the media have to brace up to the task of uncovering cases of GBV by Boko Haram sect and following up such cases in the court of law, intensifying effort at awareness creation, giving prominence to the reportage of cases of GBV, devoting special page for discussion of GBV(in the case of print media), organizing debates on the issue to enlighten the public about the incidence of violations of the rights of women and the girl-child, carrying out in-depth analyses of issues concerning GBV, use of improved surveillance system such as the closed circuit system installed in strategic places such as the parks, churches, markets, schools and other public places, alerting government of any possible outbreak of violence among others.

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