Civilian Security Under Government Captivity: Children Experiences of Law and Security in the Nigerian-Boko Haram Conflict

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by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my Auntie, for giving me the support that I needed and for always having faith in me. Without her encouragement, this would not have been possible. I would also like to dedicate this work to my partner, for constantly being by my side throughout this entire journey. For helping me navigate the emotional burdens of this work, which sometimes took a toll. For providing support on those long days of grinding, always joining me for trips to the library, and motivating me to keep going. For consistently pushing me and giving me that final push when I was near the finish line.Without him, this journey would have been gloomy and disheartening, but he brought light to pull me out of those moments.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Air Task Force.....ATF
Human Rights Watch.....HRW
Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre.....IDMC
Internally Displaced Persons.....IDP
Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad.….....Boko Haram

ABSTRACT

CIVILIAN SECURITY UNDER GOVERNMENT CAPTIVITY: CHILDREN EXPERIENCES OF LAW AND SECURITY IN THE NIGERIAN-BOKO HARAM CONFLICT

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This research investigates the dynamics of children's security in conflict zones, with a focused examination on Nigeria, particularly the challenges posed by groups like Boko Haram. Employing a qualitative research approach, informed by methodologies outlined in Keith Punch and Jonathan Smith's works, the thesis aims to provide a detailed understanding of the factors influencing children's safety in such hazardous environments, while evaluating existing legal and policy frameworks. The choice of Nigeria as a case study offers insights into the complexities of its federal system and the implications for the implementation of laws concerning children's rights. Three research questions address the adequacy of Nigerian laws: To what extent do Nigerian laws and policies aim to protect children? As these policies are implemented through government entities, such as the military and police, how, if at all, do they fall short in protecting children? And when they are implementing the law and the policies in the context of anti-

terrorism, specifically against Boko Haram, what does the legal plan look like in the anti-terrorism application? Through a comprehensive analysis of Nigerian legal documents spanning a decade, coupled with archival interviews sourced from reputable organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, the research delves into the lived experiences and perceptions of children affected by conflict. Thematic analysis of these interviews, guided by Clarke and Braun's approach, identifies recurring themes such as arbitrary arrest, physical abuse, and psychological trauma, shedding light on the challenges faced by children in conflict-affected regions. Additionally, a comparative analysis of data from various sources enhances understanding of the broader context surrounding children's security. Despite the researcher encountering limitations such as data scarcity and emotional distress during data collection, the study underscores the imperative of prioritizing children's well-being amid conflict.

Furthermore, the research highlights the disparities between legal mandates and their implementation, particularly concerning the Nigerian government's response to the threat posed by Boko Haram. Despite legal provisions aimed at safeguarding children, including those outlined in the Nigerian Constitution and the Child Rights Act of 2003, the study reveals significant gaps in enforcement and protection mechanisms. In the context of counter-terrorism efforts, the Nigerian military's detention policies exhibit a disregard for established laws, exposing children to risks of abuse and neglect. The findings underscore the urgent need for a coherent and rights-based approach to anti-terrorism strategies, one that prioritizes the protection of vulnerable populations, including children. By explaining these complexities, this research serves as a critical

resource for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars engaged in efforts to address children's security in conflict-affected regions. Ultimately, it highlights the importance of protecting children's rights and keeping them safe during conflicts, which helps create a safer and more inclusive future for everyone.

1. INTRODUCTION

As human beings, the pursuit of security is a universal aspiration, acknowledged as a fundamental necessity for human development. Diverse perceptions of what security entails exist among individuals, contributing to an understanding of this essential need. However, the realization of human security is often hindered by external forces or authoritative entities, including governmental powers.

Regrettably, reliance on government powers as protectors of our security is not always dependable. Instances of neglect or abuse of citizens' security through the failure to implement protective policies or enforce laws are not uncommon. Children, in particular, frequently find their security overshadowed or neglected, despite the existence of protective laws in some countries.

The complexity of security implementation is seen in some federal republic systems, such as Nigeria, where laws at the federal level may not consistently be enforced by regional governmental powers. This legal complexity is embodied by the choice of regional systems, leading to prioritization challenges, especially concerning children's safety.

Nigeria has been a place of great conflict over the years, and it is a place of great legal complexity. The country consists of 36 states, that have the choice to implement federal laws at the local level. Even though those states are being held together by the federal government, many of them do not always enact or abide by the federal laws

passed. Nigeria has faced conflicts with different insurgent groups that jeopardize the children's security. One of those insurgent groups is Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad, commonly known as Boko Haram, which is designated as a terrorist organization both within Nigeria and internationally. The group is known for continuously kidnapping and recruiting child soldiers, along with their ongoing violent conflicts with the government which tend to continuously endanger the lives of many individuals (Ogunniyi, 2018).

The purpose of this research is to provide insights into the effectiveness of child protection measures within the Nigerian legal framework, particularly in the challenging context of ongoing conflicts and the threats posed by terrorist organizations. Exploring the dynamics of human security and its diverse perceptions, this study centers on the critical relationship between children's well-being and the Nigerian government. Recognizing security as a fundamental human need, the research delves into the challenges faced by individuals in Nigeria, particularly children. The complex nature of security, perceived differently by individuals, prompts an investigation into the legal complexities surrounding child protection during times of conflict.

As I navigated through this study, the fundamental questions emerged: To what extent do Nigerian laws and policies aim to protect children? As these policies are implemented through government entities, such as the military and police, how, if at all, do they fall short in protecting children? And when they are implementing the law and the policies in the context of anti-terrorism, specifically against Boko Haram, what does the legal plan look like in the anti-terrorism application?

These questions serve as a compass, guiding my examination of legal frameworks, governmental responses, and the broader landscape of child security within the challenging context of Nigeria's conflict and instability.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I conduct a Literature Review where I look at human security and narratives. In the first sections I take a look at human security in several ways: finding the meaning of it, providing different points of views in regards to the definition, the concept, the context and the benefits of human security. In this I provided my own personal understanding in what I gathered from the sources provided and looking at what it means in regard to children, also raising questions out curiosity. In the second section of this chapter, I go over narratives and their connection to human security. I look at the importance of narratives and listening to narratives.

HUMAN SECURITY

For this thesis' purpose, it is essential to clarify the concept of security before delving into the discourse on human security. In line with scholarly perspectives, security is conceptualized as the state or condition of being free from threats or risks that could cause harm or damage. This definition underscores the fundamental importance of safety, assurance, and protection in ensuring the well-being and integrity of individuals and communities. Throughout this thesis, security will be approached in accordance with this scholarly understanding, emphasizing safety, assurance, and protection as foundational elements in the discourse on human security.

The notion of human security was first introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its 1994 Human Development Report (HDR). The report advocated for a 'people-centered' approach to security, shifting the focus away from traditional territorial security towards prioritizing "freedom from fear and freedom

from want" for individuals (Steiner, 2019). Over time, the concept of human security evolved. In 2012, the General Assembly resolution 66/290 articulated human security as "the right of people to live in freedom, dignity, free from poverty and despair" (UN General Assembly, 2012). Additionally, member states affirmed that human security serves as an approach to help identify and address various challenges to the survival, livelihood, and dignity of their populations (UN General Assembly, 2012). This highlights the integral role of human security in promoting good governance, mitigating violent conflicts, and emphasizing safety as a crucial component of security.

Human security is characterized by three core values essential to individual-based security. These values are embedded within the responses to commonly asked questions in the discourse on security. In their book *Human Security: Concepts and Implications*, Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh and Anuradha M. Chenoy provide fresh insights into the pivotal questions surrounding human security: 'security of whom?', 'security from what?', and 'security by what means?'. Addressing these questions is critical as they prompt a deeper understanding of the people who benefit, the dangers, and the methods needed to ensure human security. By exploring who needs protection, what threats need to be reduced, and how security can be effectively achieved, stakeholders can develop targeted actions that prioritize the well-being and safety of individuals and communities. These questions serve as guiding principles in creating detailed plans aimed at tackling complex challenges to human security in today's interconnected world.

When understanding human security, a fundamental aspect is grasping the concept of the 'security of whom', identifying who serves as the focal point of security concerns. In this inquiry, we aim to understand who requires protection or whom security

measures can safeguard. According to Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy in their book on Human Security, human security is acknowledged to "focus on individuals and peoples" (Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2007), positioning the individual as the central figure. This perspective asserts that the security of the individual is the paramount objective, overshadowing all other factors and entities (Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2007). It elevates the individual as the ultimate priority, with vulnerabilities on one side and the capacity to effect change on the other (Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2007). The 'security of who' encompasses both individuals and communities, emphasizing that their security should be the primary concern of the state among all other actors.

Next is understanding the ‘security from what’ – what are the actors or threats that security is needed for. To comprehend ‘security from what’, we need to examine the human security approach and the factors of human insecurities that tend to compromise or threaten human development. Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy examine human security, which recognizes menaces beyond violence to include a host of other threats and acknowledges new ones, stating that it "recognizes menaces beyond violence to include a host of other threats…recognizes new ones" (Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2007). This approach identifies both agency-based and structural threats that cause human insecurities. Human security threats can be inflicted by environmental scarcity, natural disasters, or by the state itself, and threats can be objective, tangible elements, or subjective perceptions (Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2007). These threats can be direct or indirect, compromising a multitude of different threats. Various factors of insecurities exist; these can be socio-economic threats, personal security threats, environmental threats, and political threats that threaten human development (Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2007). The ‘security from what’ can

encompass a multitude of various threats that jeopardize the security of individuals, whether it is structural or direct violence.

Another aspect of human security is understanding the 'security by what means' – the how, the who, and to what extent. For this study, it is imperative that we comprehend 'security by what means' to grasp what security entails and by whom it is provided in terms of protecting individuals from threats. Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy provide insights into 'security by what means' in two parts. The first part emphasizes that "individual becomes the ultimate goal, and constructs such as the state, the institutions of political democracy, and the market are relegated to secondary status as simply means to achieve that goal" (Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2007). This highlights the responsibility of the state or political democracy in ensuring the security of individuals. The second part contends that "if the primary threats stem from economic failures, violations of human rights, and political discrimination, then the guarantee of national security no longer lies in military power, but in favorable social, political and economic conditions, the promotion of human development" (Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2007). This acknowledges structural violence that requires addressing through factors such as laws and policies within institutions, which can effect change beyond the military.

These answers contextualize human security as defined by Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy and establish the context by which security can be understood. In this, they provide additional substance in addressing the causes of who and from what and by what means security is derived. This is the method by which they describe what human security looks like. This approach is particularly useful as it not only identifies the key components and sources of human insecurity but also offers a framework for developing

targeted interventions and policies to address these issues effectively. By understanding the underlying factors contributing to insecurity, policymakers and practitioners can implement strategies that prioritize the well-being and safety of individuals and communities, ultimately fostering sustainable development and peace.

Outside of understanding the definition, meaning, concept, and the context of human security, it is also crucial to recognize how it could benefit human development (Smith, 2018). Human development is essential for fostering the overall well-being and progress of societies, as it encompasses aspects such as education, healthcare, economic prosperity, and social equality (United Nations Development Programme, n.d.). Without human development, individuals may face persistent poverty, lack access to essential services, and experience diminished opportunities for personal and collective growth. Therefore, integrating human security measures into development initiatives can help create an environment where individuals have the necessary resources, opportunities, and protections to thrive, ultimately contributing to more resilient, equitable, and prosperous communities.

In Mary Kaldor's book on *Human Security*, she examines the human security approach, exploring its various benefits on human development. The first perspective is that "human security is aimed at providing the conditions (physical safety, rule of law and sustainable institutions) that are integral to development" (Kaldor, 2007). When implementing laws, policies, and other formats that guarantee physical safety through institutions, this form of security is crucial for the well-being and development of individuals. Secondly, "a human security approach necessarily involves an emphasis on human development because it is very difficult to disentangle physical and material

security. Indeed it is the absence of human development-weak institutions, lack of legitimate livelihoods that constitute the conditions that can give rise to violence" (Kaldor, 2007). Human security is essential for the needs of human development; without development, security cannot be sustained. Lastly, "the development aspects of human development put more emphasis on the needs of individuals and communities than on economic performance indicators and thus could help to reorient development strategies" (Kaldor, 2007). This suggests that there needs to be a change in prioritizing human development. These approaches provided in Kaldor's book grant insight into the benefits that human security can provide to human development.

Among the various pieces on human security, they all tend to have a common theme of the individual's security being the utmost priority of the state or institutional democracy. It is important for institutions to utilize any means of protection in regard to military force or upholding the rule of law. This is critical, especially concerning children. One of the ways children are provided security is through laws designed by the state to protect them. The implementation of laws meant to protect children is a form of human security in which their protection and safety are ensured.

Taking a human security approach to protect children through law is crucial in conflict situations. Research by Smith (2019) highlights that children are particularly vulnerable during conflicts, facing increased risks of violence, exploitation, and displacement. By enacting and enforcing laws that specifically safeguard the rights and well-being of children, governments and international organizations can mitigate these risks and ensure that children are afforded the necessary protections to thrive in conflict-affected environments. Additionally, studies by Jones (2018) emphasize that protecting

children through legal mechanisms not only upholds their fundamental human rights but also contributes to broader efforts aimed at achieving peace and stability in conflict-affected regions. Therefore, prioritizing children's security through law aligns with the overarching goal of human security – to safeguard the well-being and dignity of individuals amidst challenging circumstances, ultimately fostering sustainable peace and development. But out of curiosity, what happens to these laws in situations of emergency or anti-terror campaigns? And what happens to laws that are supposed to protect them?

NARRATIVES

A significant aspect of human security is its focus on addressing people's needs and insecurities, shedding light on the challenges they face. It provides insight into violent conflicts and their impact on individuals' lives. In Elisabeth Porter's book titled *Connecting Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation*, she explores how human security responds to individuals' insecurities based on underlying principles. One principle emphasizes "that individuals and communities sense when they are safe and also when they are feeling insecure; listening to people’s stories thus exposes what is troubling them or what might assist in their safety" (Porter, 2015). Another principal highlights "that listening to local accounts of concerns leads to a greater understanding of the root causes of insecurities" (Porter, 2015). Porter suggests that individuals' narratives expose the insecurities jeopardizing human security, and listening to their concerns provides insight into these challenges. Human security focuses on individuals, addressing "widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood, and dignity of their people"

(Porter, 2015), with narratives aiding in identifying these challenges through people's stories.

Narratives play a crucial role in the human security approach, guiding responses to various insecurities. Kaldor underscores this, stating that "stories about insecurity and particularly about security help to reveal deep layers of understanding gender-specific, age-specific, and culturally particular ways that violence affects human lives" (Porter, 2015). This highlights the significance of children's narratives, which illuminate these nuanced differences. Hearing children's stories from their lived experiences, where they confront security challenges, prompts us to delve into unspoken and unspeakable pathways (Lederach & Lederach, 2010). In *When Blood and Bones Cry Out*,John Paul Lederach and Angela Jill Lederach suggest that these experiences draw upon people's capacities for "survival, resiliency, and flourishing," offering insight into the reality of violence and their resilience (Lederach & Lederach, 2010).

The collection of narratives is vital as they "offer insights that are missed in forensic reports" (Verdeja, 2009), enhancing understanding. Sara Cobb underscores in *Speaking of Violence* that narratives "have gravitas; they are grave. They have weight. They are concrete. They materialize policies, institutions, relationships, and identities that circulate locally and globally, anywhere and everywhere" (Cobb, 2013). Narratives are crucial for legitimacy and understanding various aspects of life, often depicting accounts of horrors, traumas, and survival.

Listening to narratives of pain and human suffering often evokes strong emotions, including anger, fear, empathy, injustices, pity, or compassion. Responding to these emotions is "fundamental to empathetically listening to stories—listening not just to the

factual details of what has occurred but to the underlying nuances, variable tones, confusing ambiguities, and contextual particularities" (Porter, 2015). It is essential to listen to one's narrative as it "affirms the integrity of voice and sustains personal meaning" (Porter, 2015), ultimately aiding in transcending violence and forging a new path towards peace and hope.

Narratives play a crucial role in human security, offering invaluable insights into the challenges individuals face. They reveal aspects of pain and suffering that may otherwise remain hidden, as Porter (2015) argues, highlighting the necessity for individuals to speak their stories and for others to listen and acknowledge them. The collection of narratives exposes the insecurities jeopardizing human development and provides a deeper understanding of people's lives. As Porter (2015) notes, narratives allow human security to focus on "working to move beyond the impasse of deadly conflict." It is therefore imperative to listen to diverse voices, including those of children, to address insecurities effectively and identify gaps in laws and policies designed to ensure children's security.

In conclusion, the interplay between human security and narratives is critical to understanding and addressing insecurities. By prioritizing individuals' voices and experiences, human security initiatives can better identify and respond to the multifaceted challenges confronting communities. Through listening to narratives, policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders can gain valuable insights that inform targeted interventions, promote resilience, and pave the way for sustainable peace and development. Thus, embracing narratives within the framework of human security not

only amplifies the voices of those affected but also facilitates a more inclusive, empathetic, and effective approach to security and well-being.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this section, I delve into the methodological framework used to examine the pressing issue of children's security in conflict zones, with a specific focus on Nigeria and the challenges posed by groups like Boko Haram. My aim is to offer a deeper understanding of the factors influencing children's safety and well-being in these dangerous environments while assessing existing legal and policy frameworks.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Using the ideas of social research based on the methods provided by Keith Punch and Jonathan Smith within Keith Punch's book "Introduction to Social Research – qualitative and quantitative approaches", as well as Jonathan Smith's "Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods" I was able to apply a qualitative approach to my research design. By using various qualitative techniques, I work to ensure a strong and comprehensive exploration of children's security issues, including their experiences, perceptions, and challenges in conflict-affected regions.

Rationale for Nigeria as a Case Study

This research focuses specifically on Nigeria to provide a thorough examination of the legal complexities affecting children's lives. Unlike a comparative study, it is a case study concentrating solely on Nigeria and its legal complexities. Nigeria was chosen because of its status as a federal republic, where the 36 states have the decision to implement federal laws at the local level, raising questions about where the legal responsibilities lie, particularly for government entities like the military. Focusing exclusively on Nigeria allows for an in-depth analysis of the legal complexities and

policy challenges affecting children's security, contributing to a broader understanding of conflict-affected populations globally.

Research Questions

My research seeks to address the following overarching questions:

1. To what extent do Nigerian laws and policies aim to protect children?

2. As these policies are implemented through government entities, such as the military and police, how, if at all, do they fall short in protecting children?

3. And when they are implementing the law and the policies in the context of anti-terrorism, specifically against Boko Haram, what does the legal plan look like in the anti-terrorism application?

DATA COLLECTION

The data collection process consisted of several components, including review of legal documents and archival interviews, and some audiovisual.

Review of Legal Documents

A comprehensive review of Nigerian laws, policies, and legal frameworks pertaining to children's rights and human security forms the foundation of my research. I sourced legal documents, including the Nigerian Constitution, statutes, and relevant legislation, from official government websites and resources. My data collection spanned a decade, from 2012 to 2022, allowing for a wider analysis of legal developments and their implications for children's security. Additionally, I conducted comparative analyses of international institutions to contextualize Nigeria's legal framework within broader international standards.

Archival Interviews

In addition to legal analysis, I explored archival interviews with children affected by conflict in Nigeria, providing critical insights into their lived experiences and perceptions. These interviews were conducted in 2019, among these I reference 39 archival interviews consisting of 6 girls and 33 boys, which were sourced from reputable organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the *Washington Post*. In the interest of privacy and safety reasons, the names of the interviewees were not their real names. In many cases, the interviewers either concealed the children's identities entirely or only provided their age and gender.

The interviews gathered for this study consisted of written reports and video interviews, obtained from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the *Washington Post*. These organizations conducted thorough investigations and documented their findings in written reports, which included firsthand accounts from individuals who experienced human rights violations.

Among the interviews obtained, there were a few conducted by Human Rights Watch that were in video format. In this case, I had to watch the recorded interviews and carefully transcribe the contents into written form. It was important to capture the details and narratives shared by the interviewees accurately. The recorded interviews did include subtitles, which made the conversations easier to follow along. The subtitles displayed the spoken words as text on the screen, allowing viewers to read along while watching the interviews. By collecting both written reports and video interviews, I aimed to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the human rights issues under investigation. This approach allowed me to gather information from various sources, enhancing the

credibility and depth of my research according to Punch's empirical research methods discussions (Punch, 1998).

DATA ANALYSIS

My data analysis involved a thorough examination of collected data to derive meaningful insights and formulate evidence-based conclusions. It encompassed the following key stages:

Legal Analysis

I conducted a detailed examination of Nigerian laws, policies, and legal frameworks concerning children's rights and security. Key areas of focus included the adequacy of legal protections, implementation and enforcement of relevant laws, and accountability mechanisms. Through critical review of legal texts, I identified gaps, inconsistencies, and challenges within the existing legal framework.

Thematic Analysis of Archival Interviews

Archival interviews were examined through thematic analysis to identify recurring themes, patterns, and narratives relevant to children's security in conflict-affected regions. Coding, categorization, and interpretation of qualitative data allowed me to identify underlying trends and overarching themes, providing critical insights into challenges faced by children and to recognize forms of support required to enhance their security. Clarke and Braun's text "Thematic Analysis, The Journal of Positive Psychology", gave me a comprehensive understanding of how to conduct a thematic analysis.

The relevant codes and overarching themes that are being utilized in this research are the following:

Codes:

1. Arbitrary Arrest and Detention

2. Physical Abuse and Torture

3. Overcrowding and Poor Sanitation

4. Inadequate Food and Hygiene

5. Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

6. Stigmatization and Discrimination

7. Lack of Communication and Legal Rights

8. Psychological Impact and Trauma

Comparative Analysis

I conducted a comparative analysis of data from different sources, including legal documents, archival interviews, and literature review findings, to identify similar and differing trends. This facilitated an in-depth understanding of complex interplays shaping children's experiences and outcomes in conflict-affected regions.

LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

While this methodology presents a framework for studying the security of children in countries dealing with conflicting groups, it is important to acknowledge the limitations and challenges. Gathering data was quite difficult throughout the research process. Finding the necessary sources for this topic was a big challenge, especially because there was limited data available. There was a lack of data comprising interviews with children, as well as a scarcity of intelligence that might have included information critical of the government.

Given the sensitive nature of this research topic, it was challenging and emotionally triggering, particularly when reviewing the qualitative data on the experiences of children. Throughout the study, it became necessary to take breaks and engage in self-care to cope with the overwhelming emotions that arose from examining the experiences of the children. The stories and accounts shared by the participants were often distressing and required careful handling and consideration. It was crucial to prioritize well-being and mental health during this process to ensure a responsible approach to the research and ensure the answers were provided to the proposed questions. Taking breaks allowed for reflection, self-care, and regaining emotional balance, enabling a more objective and empathetic analysis of the data.

Another limitation of this study is its focus on a single case, which may not fully represent the complexities of children's security in other conflict-affected regions. However, the insights generated from this research can serve as a valuable example for scholars studying similar issues in different contexts. By examining the current state of children's security in Nigeria, researchers studying other places can draw comparisons, identify common patterns, and tailor their investigations to address specific challenges and dynamics relevant to their respective regions. Thus, while this study provides valuable insights into the Nigerian context, it also offers a framework for understanding and addressing children's security concerns in diverse conflict settings.

These challenges highlight the complexity of studying such a sensitive and complex subject. It requires careful consideration and interpretation of available data while prioritizing self-well-being. Despite these obstacles, the research aims to make the

most of the available information and provide valuable insights into the security concerns faced by children in these situations.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this methodology chapter provides a detailed overview of the research design, data collection methods, and analytical approaches employed to investigate children's security in conflict zones, with a specific focus on Nigeria. Despite inherent complexities and challenges, my study aims to contribute to the advancement of knowledge, policy formulation, and interventions aimed at protecting children's rights and promoting their resilience in conflict-affected regions.

4. NIGERIAN LAWS AND POLICIES

In this chapter, an in-depth analysis of the various Nigerian laws related to human security and the protection of children will be undertaken. The focus is on comprehending the extent to which Nigerian laws safeguard children. This investigation is pivotal for addressing the overarching research question: to what extent do the laws and policies of the Nigerian system aim to protect children? The legal landscape is crucial in shaping the security framework for children in Nigeria, and a comprehensive analysis of relevant laws, such as the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, the Child's Rights Act 2003, and the Anti-Torture Act 2017, is crucial.

This chapter unfolds in a systematic manner, beginning with an examination of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, which serves as the supreme law of the land. Specific attention is given to Chapter II, Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy, to illustrate the actions and duties of the states in the context of human security, particularly regarding children. Sections 17(1)(2) and 17(3) are highlighted, emphasizing the state's commitment to ideals of freedom, equality, justice, and the protection of children against exploitation and neglect.

Following this constitutional analysis, the focus shifts to the legal framework provided by the Child's Rights Act 2003. This comprehensive law, with over 200 sections, explains the rights, responsibilities, and protections afforded to Nigerian children. Relevant sections, such as those emphasizing the best interest of the child, protection from sexual abuse, and government responsibilities in investigating situations

endangering children, are scrutinized. The aim is to evaluate how these legal provisions contribute to the security of children in Nigeria.

Following that discussion, the examination extends to the Anti-Torture Act 2017, enacted to prohibit and penalize torture and inhuman treatment. This act reinforces the government's duty to ensure the rights of all individuals, including detainees, are respected, emphasizing the absolute condemnation and prohibition of torture. The relevance of this act in safeguarding the security of children is explored within the broader human security framework.

However, the effectiveness of these laws depends on implementation and enforcement. The chapter concludes by delving into the complexities arising from the federal structure of Nigeria, where individual states possess the authority to enforce or neglect federal laws. The implications of this decentralization on the protection of children's rights are critically assessed. Through this comprehensive analysis, this chapter aims to shed light on the strengths and limitations of existing legal frameworks in ensuring the security of children in Nigeria.

CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 serves as the cornerstone of Nigerian law, outlining the fundamental principles and objectives of the state. Under Chapter II, the constitution outlines the state's responsibilities regarding human security, emphasizing the ideals of freedom, equality, and justice. Specifically, Section 17(3) highlights the state's obligation to protect children from exploitation and neglect, stating, "The State shall direct its policy towards ensuring that... children, young

persons, and the aged are protected against any exploitation whatsoever, and against moral and material neglect."

This constitutional rule underscores the government's commitment to ensuring the well-being and security of children as integral components of its social order. By establishing these principles in the highest law of the land, the constitution establishes a framework for the protection of children's rights and the promotion of their security within Nigerian society. It emphasizes the importance of governmental action in safeguarding children from exploitation and neglect, thereby upholding the principles of human security and ensuring the protection of vulnerable individuals within the country. Furthermore, within this section of the constitution, it also elucidates the 'security from what,' as articulated by Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy, encompassing a multitude of threats towards individuals' human security (Tadjbakhsh Chenoy, 2007). This comprehensive understanding broadens the scope of protection afforded to children, addressing various dimensions of their well-being and safety.

Additionally, Section 17(1)(2) of the constitution further reinforces this commitment by affirming that “the state's social order is founded on ideals of Freedom, Equality, and Justice...in furtherance of this social order, governmental actions shall be humane (1)(2c).” This provision underscores the imperative for government actions to prioritize the welfare and rights of children, ensuring that policies and practices align with principles of humanity and justice.

CHILD’S RIGHTS ACT

The enactment of the Child's Rights Act in 2003 marked a significant milestone in Nigerian legislation, providing extensive protections for children across various domains.

The Act prioritizes the best interests of the child, emphasizing their right to protection and care. Section 2(1) underscores the obligation of parents, legal guardians, and other responsible entities to ensure the well-being of children, stating, "A child shall be given such protection and care as is necessary for the well-being of the child, taking into account the rights and duties of the child's parents, legal guardians, or other individuals, institutions, services, agencies, organizations or bodies legally responsible for the child."

By prioritizing the best interests of the child, the Act establishes a framework for safeguarding children's rights and promoting their security within Nigerian society. It recognizes children as individuals with inherent rights and emphasizes the responsibility of society to protect and nurture them. Through its comprehensive provisions, the Act seeks to address various aspects of children's well-being, including their physical, emotional, and social needs, thereby contributing to the enhancement of human security and the promotion of a safe and supportive environment for children to thrive.

PROTECTION AGAINST SEXUAL ABUSE

Sections 31, 32, and 33 of the Child's Rights Act address the pervasive issue of sexual abuse and exploitation, establishing stringent penalties for offenders. These provisions serve as a deterrent against such heinous crimes and underscore the state's commitment to protecting children from harm. Section 33(2) states, "A person who commits an offence under subsection (1) of this Section is liable on conviction to a fine of five hundred thousand Naira or imprisonment to a term of five years, or to both such fine and imprisonment."

By imposing significant fines and imprisonment terms on perpetrators, the Act sends a clear message that sexual abuse of children will not be tolerated, thereby

enhancing the security and safety of children within Nigerian communities. Furthermore, the Act provides a legal framework for prosecuting offenders and seeking justice for victims of sexual abuse, thereby promoting accountability and deterrence. Through its robust provisions, the Act seeks to empower children and protect their rights, thereby contributing to the enhancement of human security and the promotion of a society free from exploitation and abuse.

GOVERNMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Section 45 of the Child's Rights Act delineates the government's responsibility to investigate situations where a child's welfare is at risk. This provision underscores the state's duty to intervene and safeguard the welfare of children, particularly in cases of significant harm or neglect. Section 45(1)(b) states, "Where a State Government... has reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found, in the State is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, the State Government shall make, or cause to be made, such enquiries as it considers necessary to enable it to decide whether it should take any action to safeguard or promote the welfare of the child."

By mandating thorough inquiries and appropriate actions to promote the child's welfare, the Act holds both governmental bodies and guardians accountable for ensuring the security and well-being of children within Nigerian society. It underscores the importance of proactive intervention and preventive measures in safeguarding children from harm, thereby contributing to the enhancement of human security and the promotion of a safe and supportive environment for children to grow and thrive.

STANDARDS FOR DETENTION

Section 212 of the Child's Rights Act establishes clear standards for the detention of children, emphasizing the principle of detention as a measure of last resort. This provision underscores the state's obligation to protect the rights and well-being of detained children, ensuring they receive appropriate care, protection, and assistance. Section 212(1)(a,b)(2) states, "Detention pending trial shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time; wherever possible, be replaced by alternative measures, including close supervision, care by and placement with a family or in an educational setting or home... While in detention, a child shall be given care, protection and all necessary individual assistance, including social, educational, vocational, psychological, medical and physical assistance, that he may require having regard to his age, sex and personality."

By prioritizing the best interests of the child, even in situations of detention, the Act reinforces the state's commitment to upholding children's security and dignity, regardless of their circumstances. It emphasizes the importance of ensuring that children in detention are treated with dignity and respect, and that their rights and well-being are safeguarded at all times. Through its comprehensive provisions, the Act seeks to uphold the principles of human security and promote the rights and dignity of all children within Nigerian society.

The listed sections of the Child's Rights Act aim to protect children, ensuring their security and providing a framework for accountability. These laws play a critical role in the human security approach, emphasizing the importance of favorable social, political, and economic conditions for the promotion of human development, as

explained by Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy (2007). In the context of the Child's Rights Act, children's security is paramount, and it is the responsibility of actors such as the government to promote their development and safety. Even the Mary Kaldor (2007) approach, which highlights the integral role of the rule of law in individual development, supports this notion. To guarantee children's security, it is essential for responsible parties to enforce these laws and policies, which are crucial for children's well-being and development. In conclusion, the Child's Rights Act stands as a testament to Nigeria's commitment to safeguarding the rights and security of its youngest citizens, emphasizing their importance in the broader context of national and human security.

ANTI-TORTURE ACT

Enacted by the National Assembly in 2017, the Anti-Torture Act represents a crucial step towards preventing torture and other forms of inhuman treatment within Nigerian society. The Act prohibits any form of harm, particularly against detainees, and mandates strict adherence to international standards on the prohibition of torture. The Act emphasizes the government's responsibility to respect the rights of all individuals, including suspects, detainees, and prisoners, stating, "The Government shall... ensure that the rights of all persons, including suspects, detainees and prisoners are respected at all times and that no person placed under investigation or held in custody of any person in authority shall be subjected to physical harm, force, violence, threat or intimidation or any act that impairs his free will."

By emphasizing the protection of citizens' safety, the Anti-Torture Act reinforces principles of human security and underscores the importance of protecting individuals from physical harm and coercion. Through its provisions, the Act enhances the security

and well-being of all individuals, including children, within the Nigerian legal framework. It provides a legal framework for holding perpetrators of torture accountable and seeking justice for victims, thereby contributing to the promotion of a society free from violence and abuse. By enacting a law that protects citizens' safety, the principles of security are upheld, and people are "afforded freedom from fear and freedom from want" (Steiner, 2019).

These sections of Nigerian law collectively contribute to the protection and promotion of individuals rights and security within the country which extends to children as well. By establishing clear responsibilities, standards, and penalties, these legal provisions serve as essential safeguards against exploitation, abuse, and neglect, reinforcing Nigeria's commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of all children.

CONCLUSION

The comprehensive legal framework provided by Nigerian laws, including the Child's Rights Act and the Anti-Torture Act, constitutes a vital step towards safeguarding the rights and security of children within the country. These laws underscore the government's commitment to protecting children from exploitation, abuse, and neglect, thereby upholding the principles of human security and promoting a society where children can thrive.

By upholding the best interests of the child in legislation, the Child's Rights Act establishes a framework for ensuring children's well-being and promoting their rights across various domains. The Act addresses issues such as protection against sexual abuse, governmental responsibility for investigating child welfare concerns, and standards for

detention, thereby providing a comprehensive approach to safeguarding children's security and dignity.

Similarly, the Anti-Torture Act represents a significant advancement in preventing torture and other forms of inhuman treatment within Nigerian society. By prohibiting any form of harm, particularly against detainees, the Act reinforces principles of human security and underscores the government's responsibility to respect the rights of all individuals. Through its provisions, the Act enhances the security and well-being of all individuals, including children, within the Nigerian legal framework.

Despite the existence of these laws, challenges remain in their enforcement and implementation across different states within Nigeria. Disparities in enforcement may undermine the effectiveness of these laws in protecting children's rights and security uniformly. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from both federal and state authorities to ensure consistent enforcement and implementation of these laws across the country.

In conclusion, Nigerian laws play a crucial role in protecting and promoting the rights and security of children within the country. By providing a comprehensive legal framework and emphasizing the government's responsibility to uphold children's rights, these laws contribute to the enhancement of human security and the promotion of a society where children can thrive free from exploitation, abuse, and neglect. Implementations of these laws are safeguarding the rights and well-being of all children in Nigeria. However, it’s what comes next that is a key problem, whether these laws are effectively implemented and enforced.

5. THE CONFLICT

This chapter offers an overview of the ongoing conflict between the Nigerian government and the Islamic militant group Boko Haram, detailing their objectives, tactics, and impact, including a history of violent attacks. It also examines Nigeria's anti-terrorism efforts, highlighting concerns about children's security, such as the unlawful detention of children as part of counterterrorism measures, revealing how laws designed to protect children are disregarded in this context. Since 2011, Nigeria has been locked in a relentless struggle against Boko Haram, whose goal is to establish a rigid Islamic state governed by Sharia law. This chapter delves into the violence, fear, and resilience characterizing the conflict, exploring Boko Haram's objectives and tactics and assessing the Nigerian government's efforts to combat the threat, with particular attention to children's security and rights during this conflict.

Throughout this chapter, I discuss Nigeria's conflict with Boko Haram, shedding light on various aspects of this complex struggle. I begin by examining the objectives and tactics employed by Boko Haram, illustrating the impact of their actions on Nigerian society. Delving deeper, we'll explore specific incidents that represent the group's barbarity, and the widespread devastation Boko Haram has wrought. Transitioning to the Nigerian government's response, we'll examine their approaches to combating Boko Haram, while also confronting the troubling reality of civilian casualties and human rights violations. As we delve into the plight of detained children, we'll uncover the harrowing experiences faced by innocent victims caught in the crossfire, their rights trampled amidst the chaos of conflict. Finally, we'll confront the disconnect between

existing legal frameworks and the realities on the ground, questioning the effectiveness of laws meant to protect the vulnerable in the face of relentless violence. Join us on this exploration as we navigate the turbulent waters of Nigeria's conflict with Boko Haram, seeking understanding amidst the chaos and striving for justice in the midst of adversity.

CONFLICT IN NIGERIA: FOCUS ON BOKO HARAM

Nigeria has been tangled in a long-lasting fight with the Islamic militant group Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad, also known as Boko Haram, since 2011 (Walker, 2012). This fight has led to a series of violent attacks by Boko Haram, including bombings of public places and churches, killings of political and community leaders, assaults on police officers and government officials, and the kidnapping of children and attacks on schools (Walker, 2012). Boko Haram's main goal is to establish a strict Islamic state ruled by Sharia law, using different methods to achieve it (Walker, 2012).

Boko Haram's methods include suicide bombings, forced marriages, killings, rape, torture, abduction, and getting children to become soldiers. The conflict between Nigeria and Boko Haram has caused over 2,202 recorded incidents involving Boko Haram fighters, civilians, and government forces, resulting in over 37,530 deaths between June 2011 and June 2018 (Campbell & Harwood, 2018). Boko Haram recruits young people by lying to them and forcing them to commit horrendous acts, which keeps the cycle of violence and instability going in Nigerian society (Inks et al., 2016).

Boko Haram's focus on children serves as several purposes in their campaign of violence and terror. Firstly, children are often perceived as more vulnerable and easier targets for recruitment and indoctrination. By targeting children, Boko Haram aims to build its ranks with young fighters who can be molded into loyal and obedient followers

(Beckman, 2018). The group preys on vulnerable youth, offering them a sense of belonging, purpose, and empowerment that may be lacking in their lives due to poverty, marginalization, or other socio-economic factors (Lyon, 2019).

Moreover, Boko Haram's use of children as combatants and suicide bombers is a deliberate tactic to instill fear and maximize the psychological impact of their attacks. Children are often seen as less suspicious and can more easily infiltrate civilian areas, making them effective weapons in asymmetrical warfare (Blanchard, 2018). The group exploits the innocence and trust associated with children to carry out atrocities that shock and horrify both local communities and the international community (Brett, 2018).

Boko Haram also targets children as a means of exerting control and asserting dominance over local populations. By abducting schoolgirls, for example, the group aims to undermine the authority of the Nigerian government and instill a sense of insecurity and helplessness among civilians (Kubatko, 2019). The mass abduction of schoolchildren not only generates global attention and media coverage but also serves as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the government, allowing Boko Haram to extract concessions or secure the release of imprisoned fighters (Graubart, 2020).

Additionally, Boko Haram's focus on children is rooted in its ideological beliefs and interpretation of Islam. The group espouses a radical ideology that views Western education as sinful and incompatible with their vision of an Islamic state governed by Sharia law (Lynch, 2019). By targeting schools and educational institutions, Boko Haram seeks to enforce its extremist agenda and disrupt the secular education system, which it perceives as a threat to its religious and ideological authority (Lange, 2017).

Apart from the use of children and loss of lives, the conflict has had terrible effects on affected communities, with millions forced to leave their homes and live in fear all the time (IDMC, 2021). The attacks on schools have particularly disrupted education, like the famous kidnapping of over 200 schoolgirls from Chibok in 2014 (Amnesty International, 2015). These girls were forced into marriages, sexual slavery, and other bad things, leaving them with lasting physical and mental harm (HRW, 2018).

The conflict has also had a profound impact on the economy of Nigeria. Businesses have been forced to close down due to the constant threat of violence, resulting in loss of jobs and livelihoods for many Nigerians. The instability has also deterred foreign investment, hindering economic growth and development in the region. The lack of security and infrastructure damages caused by Boko Haram attacks further exacerbate these economic challenges, creating a cycle of poverty and hardship for affected communities (O'Donnell, 2019).

Furthermore, the conflict has strained social cohesion and worsened ethnic and religious tensions within Nigeria. Communities are divided along ethnic and religious lines, leading to mistrust and conflict between different groups. This division of society makes it harder to achieve peace and reconciliation, as deep-seated grievances and animosities continue to fuel the conflict. Efforts to address these underlying social divisions are crucial for fostering unity and promoting a peaceful resolution to the conflict (Ibrahim, 2017).

In addition, the conflict has taken a heavy toll on the mental health and well-being of individuals affected by the violence. Constant exposure to trauma, fear, and insecurity has led to widespread psychological distress and trauma-related disorders among

survivors. Access to mental health services is limited, worsening the suffering of those grappling with the psychological aftermath of the conflict. Addressing the mental health needs of affected populations is essential for promoting healing and resilience in the face of adversity (Miller et al., 2020).

BOKO HARAM ATTACKS

The seriousness of Boko Haram's actions is clear from a series of significant incidents reported by the U.S Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism:

- June 16, 2011: Attack on the national police headquarters, resulting in six deaths.
- August 26, 2011: Bombing of the UN headquarters in Abuja, killing at least 21 people.
- January 20, 2012: Coordinated attacks in Kano State, leading to 185 deaths.
- April 14, 2014: Notorious kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls in Chibok, Borno State.
- May 17, 2014: Attack on villagers in Gamboru Ngala, causing about 150 deaths.
- Throughout 2014: Responsible for the deaths of around 5,000 civilians in Nigeria.
- January 3-7, 2015: Massacre in Baga, with over 2,000 deaths.
- April 3, 2016: Beheading of five villagers in Sandawadjiri.
- January 2017: Attack on a refugee camp, resulting in over 150 deaths.

- November 21, 2017: Suicide bombings at a mosque in Adamawa State, killing 50 people.
- December 11, 2020: Kidnapping of over 344 male students from a secondary school in Katsina State.

These incidents demonstrate the alarming impact of Boko Haram's actions, which have caused immense loss of life, widespread fear, and disruption to communities in Nigeria. The significance of Boko Haram engaging in kidnapping and attacking international organizations lies in the expansion of their tactics and targets. Initially known for localized attacks on security forces and civilians, their shift towards high-profile kidnappings and attacks on international entities reflects a desire to garner attention, spread fear, and undermine the Nigerian government's authority.

Kidnappings, such as the infamous abduction of schoolgirls in Chibok, not only serve as propaganda tools but also generate international outrage and pressure on the government. Targeting international organizations, like the UN headquarters bombing in Abuja, demonstrates Boko Haram's ambition to assert itself on a global stage and challenge perceived Western influence.

The escalation in violence and the widening scope of their attacks suggest a strategic evolution aimed at maximizing impact and destabilizing both Nigeria and the broader region. This trend indicates a willingness to adopt more ruthless tactics and expand their reach, posing a significant threat to regional stability and security.

NIGERIAN ANTI-TERRORISM EFFORTS

The Nigerian government has tried different things to fight against Boko Haram, including setting up a military team with different security groups (Solomon, 2012). They have also used bombings and soldiers to try and stop Boko Haram in the North-East area (Enenche, 2020a; Enenche, 2020b). But some people worry that these actions are hurting regular people and violating their rights, making the fighting worse (Dowd & Drury, 2017; Walker, 2012). The government has not tried talking to Boko Haram to solve things peacefully, which could help stop the violence (Walker, 2012).

The Nigerian government's efforts to counter Boko Haram have been hindered by systemic corruption and inefficiencies within the security system (Tella, 2019). Mismanagement of resources, embezzlement, and lack of accountability undermine the effectiveness of anti-terrorism operations, allowing Boko Haram to exploit vulnerabilities and continue its reign of terror. Addressing corruption and improving governance within security institutions are essential for enhancing the capacity and integrity of anti-terrorism efforts in Nigeria (Morgan, 2020).

Furthermore, the militarized approach adopted by the Nigerian government has resulted in widespread human rights abuses and violations, particularly against civilians in conflict-affected areas (Ibeanu, 2018). Reports of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and torture by security forces have raised serious concerns about the government's commitment to upholding human rights and the rule of law. The lack of accountability for these abuses undermines public trust and perpetuates a culture of impunity, fueling grievances and radicalization among affected populations (Olaopa, 2016).

In addition, the Nigerian government's failure to address underlying socio-economic grievances and provide viable alternatives to extremism worsens the root causes of the conflict (Ezike, 2017). Widespread poverty, unemployment, and marginalization create fertile ground for radicalization and recruitment by Boko Haram, particularly among marginalized youth. Implementing inclusive development policies and programs that address socio-economic disparities and promote social cohesion are essential for addressing the root causes of extremism and fostering long-term peace and stability in Nigeria (Nwankwo, 2019).

GOVERNMENT DETENTION CAMPS

In the effort to fight against Boko Haram, the Nigerian military has detained thousands of children, some as young as five, during the conflict. Without proper evidence, many children have been arrested on suspicion of being involved with Boko Haram. Between January 2013 and March 2019, over 3,600 cases of children being held in military barracks were documented by Human Rights Watch and the United Nations (Amnesty International Report, 2020; Becker, 2019; Kaalu & Njoku, 2020). Conditions in these detention centers have been reported to be harsh, with inadequate sanitation, food, and water, overcrowding, and instances of sexual violence and beatings by soldiers (Amnesty International Report, 2020). The lack of communication with families or lawyers and the absence of due process has left these children vulnerable to abuse (Williams & Guttschuss, 2012). Families often have no information about their detained children, leading to uncertainty about their well-being (Becker, 2019).

The long-term detention and mistreatment of children by the Nigerian military have severe consequences for their physical and mental health. Extended detention can cause trauma, anxiety, and depression among children (Human Rights Watch, 2015). The lack of access to proper healthcare and psychological support prolongs their suffering and diminishes their chances of recovery and reintegration into society. Moreover, the detention of children deprives them of education and future opportunities, as many are unable to attend school while in custody (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

Many of the children arrested by the Nigerian military were fleeing areas attacked by Boko Haram and were subsequently held in various military detention centers, such as Giwa barracks in Maiduguri or the Kainji base in Niger state (Human Rights Watch, 2015). Reports from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch indicate that conditions within these camps are harsh, leading detainees to regret surrendering to the government (Amnesty International Report, 2020). Detainees have expressed reluctance to recommend others to surrender due to fear of mistreatment in these facilities.

These findings underscore the need for the Nigerian government to address unlawful detentions and inhumane treatment of children in military custody. Such practices violate international human rights standards and undermine trust among individuals seeking refuge from Boko Haram. Upholding principles of justice, fairness, and respect for human rights is essential for effective counterinsurgency efforts.

NO SPACE FOR LAWS

The conflict between the Nigerian government and Boko Haram has created challenges for protecting children and upholding laws. Boko Haram's brutal tactics, including

suicide bombings and forced marriages, have caused immense loss of life and widespread fear. In response, the Nigerian government has implemented various anti-terrorism efforts, often resorting to aggressive measures. These approaches, such as mass arrests and security operations, endanger innocent civilians, including children.

The Nigerian government's aggressive tactics in combating Boko Haram, without engaging in political dialogue, have heightened risks faced by innocent lives (Dowd & Drury, 2017; Walker, 2012). Lack of comprehensive approaches, including peaceful resolutions, perpetuates violence and negatively affects children. Detention and mistreatment of children violate Nigerian laws safeguarding children's security. Enforcement of laws becomes challenging, especially concerning children's protection, amid anti-terrorism efforts. The focus on countering Boko Haram may overshadow the importance of upholding legal standards for children's rights security. Aggressive tactics and mass detentions disregard children's rights and legal standards meant to protect them.

6. THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN'S NARRATIVES

In the previous chapter, I provided a brief explanation that sheds light on the unfortunate reality that children are not being adequately protected. They are subjected to mistreatment while unlawfully held in the detention camps of Nigeria. In this chapter, I take a closer look at what children had to say about their experiences in the detention camps. In this you will read the narratives of the children, which I had collected. They include available interviews of the children telling of their time and experiences in the Nigerian detention camps. This chapter will focus on 3 major sections in which I filtered the themes of the narratives that I collected. The first section will be focusing on how children are not protected under detention, looking at how they are not receiving the proper security to ensure their safety when detained. Following the first section, section two will focus on the mistreatment of children under detention, by examing how they are actively being mistreated and their rights and protections violated. The third section will primarily focus on the themes in which the children's narratives illustrate how the detention camps are another form of captivity, similar to what they would have experienced under Boko Haram.

LACK OF PROTECTION UNDER DETENTION

Within the course of the analysis of the interviews of the children, there were several distinct commonalities regarding their quality of treatment while under detention within the Nigerian military detention camps. These experiences they expressed described a variety of forms of lived events regarding their treatment. Several of these events reoccurred throughout the course of the interviews and subsequently could be

described under overarching themes of experience. These themes included: arbitrary detention and lack of justice, the impact on children, and death and mortality.

Arbitrary Detention and Lack of Justice

This portion will focus on the theme of arbitrary detention and the lack of justice that children face while in Nigerian detention camps. During my research, I discovered several quotes highlighting the unjust and arbitrary detention of individuals without concrete reasons or evidence of wrongdoing. In this subsection, you will see the lack of legal consistency and laws through the accounts of children. These accounts will paint a picture of the arbitrary abuses and lack of justice faced by children and the jeopardy of their security.

One account that exemplifies this theme is as follows:

"I was never given an opportunity to contact my family or a lawyer...They didn't provide one for me. There was no mention of charges against me and I was not brought before any court." -Sadiq, Male, Age Unknown, Giwa Barracks, Human Rights Watch

This quote is similar to many accounts made by children which reflect the lack of legal rights and procedural safeguards for minors. It exposes the system in which children are deprived of their right to communicate with their families or seek legal help. They are also held without any information about the accusations against them, and they are not granted the legal process that the Child Rights Act provides for children when detained, ensuring the child's overall well-being and security (please refer to Chapter 4 on Nigerian Laws and Policies). This quote reflects the distressing reality faced by young detainees, illustrating how their basic rights to legal representation and due process are systematically denied.

Similar to the previous testimony, another child's testimony expresses their sense of injustice and frustration with the government as they were also detained without clear or valid reasoning:

"They didn't do me justice. They detained me without any concrete reason. They denied me any visitors even though I didn't do anything wrong. They denied the right of my parents to see me. I have been separated from my friends. If I was not detained at Giwa, I would be at home helping my parents." -Yar'adua, Male, Age 17, Giwa Barracks, Human Rights Watch.

The quote highlights the child's grievances and dissatisfaction with the treatment they received when detained. It illustrates the denial of any rights, including the right to have visitors or their parents. The quote sheds light on the negative consequences of arbitrary detention and the infringement it has upon the individual's rights and well-being.

An expression that tended to be common amongst the children's testimonies was confusion. This child's testimony expresses their uncertainty:

"I don't know why they arrested me. Maybe someone overheard me talking about Boko Haram." -Maliki, Male, Age 16, Giwa Barracks, Human Rights Watch

This quote strongly shows how many young detainees were confused. They didn't understand why they were arrested. This confusion points to problems with how the legal process happened - it wasn't clear and fair. These narratives reveal how troubling the situation is for these children. This quote strongly illustrates the profound confusion experienced by many young detainees regarding the reasons for their arrest. Their inability to comprehend the grounds for their detention raises significant questions about the clarity and fairness of the legal process they underwent. Despite being subjected to

imprisonment, they lacked a clear understanding of the charges against them or the legal procedures involved. This confusion highlights systemic issues within the legal system, suggesting potential flaws in due process and adherence to legal rights. Furthermore, their confusion serves as compelling evidence that they were not involved in activities deserving punishment. The fact that they were unable to grasp the reasons behind their detention undermines any notion of their culpability, emphasizing the injustice and arbitrariness of their confinement. These narratives shed light on the profound challenges faced by these children within the legal system, raising important questions about their rights and the fairness of their treatment.

These powerful voices shed light on the legal system, exposing the lack of legal protection for children when they are detained. When combating terrorist groups, the legal framework is not consistently upheld. With laws designed to ensure the well-being and security of children, they fall short. Due to this, it subjects children to mistreatment, physical and psychological abuse, and sexual violence. The accounts made illustrate the lack of legal safeguards for children in detention camps.

Impact on Children and Families

In this portion, the theme of impact on children and families paints another grim picture of the profound and multiple impacts on individuals who were subjected to detention and conflict-related violence. While in detention, children faced deep and distressing impacts of emotional trauma, physical suffering, and increased vulnerability to abuse. As a result of the arbitrary dentations, many families live under false pretenses and complete lack of information of their loved one's conditions, not knowing if they are alive or dead. The consequences of the lack of protections being respected and laws being

enforced to protect the children result in deep and severe impacts for those who suffer within the custody of the Nigerian government detention camps. The accounts in this subsection will reveal the impacts of related circumstances during detention and the impacts after the detention. For instance, Abdullahi's experience:

> 'He saw his brother's body in the cell but didn't know the cause of death. When Abdullahi was released two months later, he discovered that the authorities had never informed his parents of his brother's death. 'So I had to tell them. They cried bitterly.'" -Abdullahi, Male, Age 16, Giwa Barracks, Human Rights Watch

This quote highlights the emotional and psychological impact left on Abdullahi after his detention experience. Witnessing his brother's death and being forced to inform his parents about it left him with profound emotional trauma. In addition to the traumatic impact on Abdullahi of witnessing a loved one's death and bearing the burden of delivering the tragic news, it also deeply affects the family's sense of hope and certainty, shrouded in deception. These impacts that were left stem from the negligence and callousness of the soldiers. This is a challenge that many detainees and their families endure.

Another impact that former detainees had to endure as a result of being detained is the discrimination they would face when returning home, as exemplified by one former detainee:

"People in the community call us Boko Haram. They discriminate against those of us who were detained, and this is unfair."

-Idriss, Male, Age 11, Giwa Barracks, Human Rights Watch

Idriss, like many other former detainees, was not easily welcomed back into his former community. As a result of being detained by the military on the assumption of having an association with Boko Haram, former detainees would often face discrimination from many community members. This discrimination can have profound and enduring effects on children's social and psychological well-being. It further isolates children from their families and communities, creating a sense of loneliness, anxiety, and fear that hinders their reintegration into society. The weight of this discrimination can make the trauma they've experienced in detention worse, making the process of rebuilding their lives more challenging while also disrupting their sense of belonging.

While in detention, children's health seems to be of the least concern. When analyzing the interviews, many children were sadly impacted due to the lack of food. As a result of the food shortage, many children suffered from malnutrition, just like Bana. In the interview with Bana, he said:

"The food was never enough... I was always hungry. I became so lean and unrecognizable." - Bana, Male, Age 17, Giwa Barracks, Human Rights Watch

Similar to Bana, children who manage to survive the camp become unrecognizable due to the lack of nutrition and starvation. This leads to malnutrition and profoundly affects their physical health. Bana's quote underscores the physical health consequences of inadequate food provision in detention. Malnutrition can result in significant health issues for children, impacting their growth, energy levels, and overall well-being. It also highlights the government's failure to provide for basic needs.

Sadly, some children had faced even graver consequences as a result of soldiers failing to provide enough food for children. In addition to facing malnutrition, children

are at risk of sexual abuse. As a result of not being provided with enough food, this would lead to children taking food from adults out of desperation from starvation. Unfortunately, some adults took advantage of this, which led to further abuse towards the children. In one of the interviews conducted by Amnesty International, a former child detainee had explained:

"[The food] was not enough for the children…Because of that, some children took the adults' food and then when they sleep, [the adults] will [sexually] harass them. Those who are powerful do it."-Anonymous, Male, Age 16-17, Giwa Barracks, Amnesty International

This quote shows that vulnerability is increased, and the lack of food in detention centers can force children to resort to stealing food from adults. This desperation increases their vulnerability to sexual abuse and exploitation, highlighting the dangerous environment they are subjected to.

This subsection reveals significant impacts on children and families affected by detention. The quotes demonstrate various negative effects on children, including emotional trauma, discrimination, malnutrition, and increased vulnerability to abuse. It also highlights the lack of concern for children's well-being and security, placing them at greater risk. This reflects how the laws that are already in place to protect children from abuse and neglect were not being followed or respected, in turn which led to these impacts on children. Ultimately, these quotes expose systematic failures in upholding the laws designed to prevent such impacts.

Death and Mortality

In this portion, the theme of death and mortality exemplifies the lack of protection for children while in government custody. The following quotes presented throughout this subsection mention the deaths of detainees in custody, including both adults and children. These deaths result from harsh conditions, overcrowding, and a lack of medical care. They occur due to illness, distress, and beatings. This subsection will demonstrate that children's safety is at risk and provide answers to the question of whether laws are being upheld within government facilities. To illustrate the dire situation, one detainee's account:

"We were more than 390 [detainees]. In a week, two or three people died. There was so much congestion, and the weather was very hot. You would have to sit like this through the whole night. There was no space to lie down. All that stress, that's why people died…" -F.N, Male, Age 18, Bama and Giwa Barracks, Amnesty International.

F.N.'s experience, like many others, shows the lack of protection afforded to children within the detention facility. The overcrowding, with more than 390 detainees, indicates a disregard for their safety and well-being. The fact that two to three people were dying every week within these conditions is a true reflection of the inadequate care provided, and this includes children who require more attention and protection, as illustrated in the Nigerian Child Rights Act (please refer to Chapter 4 on Nigerian Laws and Policies). Overall, this quote reveals a disturbing absence of security and care for children, exposing them to grave risks and hardships within the facility.

Another account that further highlights the lack of protection for children within government custody exposes the recurring pattern of neglect and irresponsibility on the

part of the soldiers, resulting in a high mortality rate among children. Abdulrahman shared:

"He [14year old friend] lost consciousness in the night in the cell from the heat. He initially reported that he was sick and was in distress. They took him away and gave him an injection and medicines and brought him back later the same day. By morning the next day, he was unconscious, and we found him dead. The soldiers took his body away but we don't know what happened to it."- Abdulrahman, Male, Age 16, Giwa Barracks, Human Rights Watch

This account serves as another testimony in which children's overall well-being in detention is not secured. Abdulrahman's narrative exposes the consequences of the lack of proper care and attention within these facilities and the overall consequences when laws are not being obeyed. The incident he describes, involving the tragic death of a 14-year-old friend, demonstrates the grave disregard for children's lives and safety. It illustrates the dangers that children in these camps are facing, especially when the laws meant to protect them are not being upheld. Such negligence not only puts young lives at risk but also raises concerns about accountability and the responsibility of those in charge of providing security for the children when it comes to anti-terrorism efforts.

In this portion of the text, the theme of death and mortality is used to highlight the lack of protection for children held in government custody. Several quotes in this subsection reference the deaths of detainees, including both adults and children, within these facilities. These deaths are attributed to harsh conditions, overcrowding, and inadequate medical care, resulting from factors such as illness, distress, and physical abuse. The quotes provided raise concerns about accountability and responsibility in

ensuring the security and well-being of children in such detention facilities, especially in the context of anti-terrorism efforts. Overall, this subsection highlights the alarming absence of security and care for children in government custody, exposing them to serious risks and hardships. Additionally, the experience of witnessing the deaths of people around them, including those their own age, is deeply unsettling for young people who are not psychologically prepared for such events. It underscores the importance of shielding young individuals from extreme stressors to safeguard their mental and emotional well-being.

MISTREATMENT OF CHILDREN UNDER DETENTION

In this section of the chapter, I will be looking at the mistreatment of children under detention. This section will include 3 major themes that focus on inhumane living conditions, stigmatization, and physical and psychological abuse. The section will include testimonies from the lived experiences of the children that have suffered. The first theme will be looking at the living conditions of the children within detention centers.

Inhumane Living Conditions

In this portion, I explore a critical theme: the harsh and inhumane living conditions within detention centers. The quotes vividly depict the terrible living conditions detainees endure, such as overcrowding, the absence of clean and safe facilities for sanitation, poor hygiene, insufficient food, and sweltering heat. Moreover, the detainees are forced to exist in unsanitary surroundings, often with restricted access to proper toilets, and, distressingly, they are sometimes compelled to defecate in front of others. This subsection sheds light on the distressing realities faced by individuals within

these detention centers, highlighting the urgent need for understanding and improvement. It is important to hear directly from the children themselves because their firsthand accounts provide invaluable insights into the harsh realities they face within detention centers, helping to raise awareness, advocate for reforms, and ultimately improve conditions for all detainees.

One account that powerfully illustrates these conditions comes from a detainee named Abdulsalam, who shared,

“In the adult cell there was always a queue to use the one toilet because we were too many. Sometimes three people will squat at different angles of the bowl to use the toilet at the same time. We used a stick to push the feces down when we had no water to flush.” -Abdulsalam, Male, Age 17, Giwa Barracks Human Rights Watch

This distressing account highlights the severe hardships faced by detainees, where access to even basic facilities like a toilet is a daily struggle. Abdulsalam's words underscore the urgent need for improvements in these detention centers to ensure the dignity and well-being of those who are confined within them. Such narratives underscore the urgency of addressing these human rights concerns and advocating for lasting change.

Another detainee, who shared a similar experience, described the dire conditions further, stating:

"In all the cells, there was only one toilet. Even at night, there was a queue… Sometimes, when people were sick, they would defecate or urinate on their own body. The military would just give a [1-litre] bottle of water and say, “Clean yourself.” They wouldn’t [give new clothes]. They’d just say, “Wash your body, wash yourself” [with the

water]… I got sick. All of my body had rashes." -Anonymous, Male, Age 18, Giwa Barracks, Amnesty International

These firsthand testimonies are invaluable as it vividly illustrates the harsh realities within the detention centers. The quote reveals the shocking truth that there was only one toilet for all the detainees, resulting in long queues, even at night. What's even more distressing is the description of how sick detainees were left with no choice but to defecate or urinate where they were due to the lack of access to proper facilities. Instead of receiving the necessary care or clean clothing, they were handed a small bottle of water and told to "clean yourself" with it. The consequences of these conditions were devastating, as evidenced by the detainee's account of developing painful rashes all over their body. This testimony addresses the inhumane treatment and conditions endured by those detained, revealing the overall lack of protection for children's safety and wellbeing.

Ibrahim, who shared a similar experience, described the dire conditions further, stating:

"They would give a half plate of food for five people. I was hungry all the time."-Ibrahim, Male, Age 10, Giwa Barracks, Human Rights Watch

This account reveals the alarming food shortages experienced by detainees, where they were provided with insufficient meals, leading to chronic hunger and malnutrition. These firsthand narratives are incredibly important because they vividly illustrate the harsh realities within the detention centers, addressing not only sanitation and hygiene issues but also the critical matter of inadequate nourishment.

Additionally, another detainee added,

"Two hundred people were kept in one big room. The smell made me sick, and I had trouble eating. I could see maggots crawling in my soup." -Goggo, Female, Age 14, Giwa Barracks, Washington Post

This statement reveals the extreme overcrowding and unsanitary conditions within the detention centers, where detainees were subjected to a disgusting environment that compromised their health and well-being. These heartbreaking accounts emphasize how the laws that are in place to safeguard children are not being upheld in the concerns of the overall well-being of children, and how these narratives are critical as we are feeling the pain of the children's accounts.

In this subsection, we have delved into a critical theme that exposes the harsh and inhumane living conditions within detention centers. The quotes we have examined reveal an unsettling portrayal of the distressing realities detainees endure such as overcrowding, the absence of clean and safe sanitation facilities, poor hygiene, insufficient food, and sweltering heat. That detainees are forced to endure these conditions while often lacking proper access to toilets and, in some heartbreaking instances, compelled to defecate in front of others. The firsthand accounts from children like Abdulsalam, Ibrahim, Goggo, and others, have painted a vivid and sad picture of life within these detention centers. Abdulsalam's narrative underscores the daily struggles faced by detainees, where even the most basic facilities like a toilet become a luxury. These narratives serve as powerful reminders of the urgent need for improvements within these detention centers, ensuring the dignity and well-being of those confined within them.

Additionally, the account of the anonymous detainee sheds light on the devastating consequences of such conditions, including painful rashes and overall health deterioration. Ibrahim's narrative highlights the chronic hunger and malnutrition detainees face due to insufficient meals, while Goggo's account reveals the extreme overcrowding and unsanitary environment that puts the health and well-being of detainees at serve risk. These narratives are not only crucial for shedding light on the inhumane treatment and conditions endured by those detained but also for emphasizing the overall lack of protection for children's safety and well-being within these facilities. The importance of these children's narratives deepens our understanding and reveals the extent of the severity of the insecurities.

Stigmatization

In this subsection, I shine a light on the issue of stigmatization that has negatively affected many children who were taken and detained. The children find themselves falsely labeled as Boko Haram affiliates, leading to unjust treatment and abuse within the detention centers. This exploration reveals a distressing reality, where many of these children are detained without concrete evidence, forced to confess association with the terror group. Blinded by the effects of the conflict with Boko Haram, soldiers appear to have associated every child with the terror group, creating stigmatization that deprives these children of the opportunity to declare their innocence. Ibrahim, a former detainee at Giwa Barracks, illustrates this issue when he says:

"We said we escaped from Boko Haram, but the military did not believe us. They said that we were part of Boko Haram." -Ibrahim, Male, Age 10 Giwa Barracks, Human Rights Watch

His words shed light on the serious problems these young detainees face. When they try to escape from dangerous situations, they don't have any help or protection. Ibrahim's testimony reveals that the military didn't seem interested in helping these children. Instead, they already thought the kids were part of Boko Haram and didn't believe what the children said. When the children turned to the military for help, they didn't receive any security or protection. This narrative provides a demonstration in which children have nowhere to go when seeking protection, highlighting how children can become endangered in conflict settings.

Additionally, another anonymous testimony reveals the extent of stigmatization and abuse faced by these young detainees within the detention centers:

"CJTF [Civilian Joint Task Force] men were the ones beating us, while the soldiers sat and watched. My legs and hands were bound together at the back, and I was hung from a tree, head facing down… When they untied me, I couldn't feel my legs and hands and could barely walk. The same thing was done to my younger brother. They did that to us because we refused to accept that we were Boko Haram, during interrogation. The interrogation was done by soldiers and CJTF. They said it wasn't possible we would live for years with Boko Haram and not join them, so they said we were lying… My younger brother was beaten so badly that he could not eat with his hands" Anonymous, Male, Age 19, Bama Barracks, Amnesty International

This account further emphasizes the mistreatment faced by the young detainees, not only outside but also within the detention centers. It reveals the reality of CJTF members brutally assaulting the children while soldiers looked on passively. Their cruel tactics, used to cause extreme physical suffering towards children, are monstrous. These

horrors were inflicted on the children because they refused to admit any affiliation with Boko Haram during interrogations. The soldiers and CJTF members disregarded their pleas and accused them of falsehoods, arguing that living alongside Boko Haram for years without joining them was impossible. The abuse was so severe that it left the younger brother unable to use his hands for eating. This narrative provides further evidence of the endangerment children faced during these anti-terrorism efforts. It also provides an account of the horrors and traumas that the children have experienced, exposing the insecurities that are endangering the lives of the children.

Another testimony reveals the extent of stigmatization and abuse faced by these young detainees within the detention centers:

"If you said you were Boko Haram, they'd stop. If you didn't, they kept beating you. I denied it, so they beat me. So many [men and boys] were innocent. Even me, there was one time they were beating me badly, and they asked [if I was Boko Haram] and I delayed [in answering]. Then they stopped beating me and took me back to my cell. They were happy." -Anonymous, Age 13, Kainji Barracks, Amnesty International

This account delves deeper into the unjust treatment and abuse suffered by children within the confines of the detention centers. It reveals the horrific reality of detainees being subjected to physical beatings if they refused to falsely admit affiliation with Boko Haram during interrogations. Many of these detainees were innocent, yet they endured brutal assaults. The narrative sheds light on the agony these young individuals faced, and the tactics used to extract false confessions.

Additionally, another former detainee provides further insight into the stigmatization faced by these young detainees.

"When we entered [the cell], people asked if we were Boko Haram. We said no, we weren't Boko Haram. The people there [in Giwa], they're all innocent—so many of them. If we'd told them we were Boko Haram, they would have killed us, because they say we brought all this on them… We were 350 [in the cell]. Among the 350, we [from Boko Haram] know ourselves. Not more than 50 were Boko Haram. The other 300, they were all innocent." -Anonymous, Age 18, Giwa Barracks, Amnesty International

This testimony exposes the stigmatization faced by these young detainees, many of whom were wrongly accused of affiliations with Boko Haram. The narrative highlights the dire situation within detention centers, where the majority of detainees were innocent and falsely labeled. Such stigmatization not only subjects these children to unjust treatment but also puts their lives in danger as they must deal with the consequences of being falsely associated with a terrorist group.

These stories are not just tales; they are important proof of the unfair treatment kids face under the authority of the military. They vividly highlight the lack of security and protection provided to children in these detention camps. These narratives reveal that the laws set in place to safeguard the rights of these detainees are not being upheld, shedding light on the government's failure to fulfill its duty to protect children's rights. In this section, we have brought attention to the issue of stigmatization that has negatively impacted many children who were taken and detained. The children find themselves unfairly labeled as Boko Haram affiliates, resulting in their mistreatment and abuse within the detention centers.

Physical and Psychological Suffering

In this portion of the section, we will explore a critical theme: the physical and psychological suffering of children within the detention centers. The quotes within this portion of this section will depict the physical, sexual, and psychological suffering experienced by the detainees. Many of the quotes obtained speak about the pain, trauma, abuse, mental distress, and overall mistreatment of children in the detention centers. The accounts given will highlight the intense psychological distress physical abuses imposed on the former detainees. These accounts also reveal a pattern of violence, including severe beatings, injuries, and sexual abuse. Amongst these accounts, one specific narrative brings light to the intense suffering and brutality, Saeed a former detainee says:

"We were beaten badly. Some people had their hands broken and suffered severe injuries from the beatings during interrogation. I was injured on my arm during my interrogation. They asked me if I was a member of Boko Haram and beat me up when I said no. They tied my hands and legs and hung me to a tree and continued to flog me. They flogged me and left me tied to the tree from morning till evening." -Saeed, Male, Age 17, Giwa Barracks

Saeed's account unveils the brutal physical and psychological torment endured by these young detainees. This testimony demonstrates an upsetting scene of physical abuse and torture during interrogations, highlighting the violations committed against children. Many children like Saeed are subjected to extreme brutality. These narrative stresses the urgent need to address the abuses occurring within these detention centers. Saeed's

account exposes the severity of the abuses occurring, demonstrating the lack of care to upkeep the overall well-being and security of children.

In addition to Saeed's account, the testimony of two additional young detainees reveals the conditions they faced within these detention centers:

"They hit us children with a rope of animal skin and slapped our parents with the flat end of a long knife. They beat us every day. They hit me about 20 times."-Ibrahim, Male, Age 10, Giwa Barracks, Human Rights Watch

"We were beaten thoroughly in Bama. Even my hand now, it's not feeling well because of the beating. They beat me with sticks. They beat me so much, I even went unconscious… It was the first days when I arrived, they did the beating" -F. N, Male, Age 18, Bama and Gina Barracks, Amnesty International

These testimonies reveal the extreme brutality and violence that children endure while in detention. The significance of these testimonies lies in their description of the severe physical abuse and torture inflicted upon children within these detention centers. These accounts shed light on the harsh realities faced by young detainees, highlighting the violation of their human rights. Such accounts are crucial in raising awareness about the abuses and lack of care for the well-being and security of the children vulnerability. Sadly, these accounts demonstrate the laws in place to protect children from such cruelties are neglected and are just a façade.

Unfortunately, children within these camps not only faced physical abuse but also suffered psychological abuse. One former detainee, vividly recalled on this psychological abuse:

“They asked everyone individually if they were part of Boko Haram, and after they asked the last person, started over again with the first person in the group. It lasted about one hour. They scared the children, threatening us with a gun. They said, ‘If you don’t speak the truth, we will shoot you."-Sani, Male, Age 15, Giwa Barracks.

The quote from Sani describes a traumatic experience of repetitive interrogations by authorities. The interrogators used intimidation and the threat of violence, to coerce individuals to falsely confess to the accusations. This testimony is crucial as it highlights the severe psychological trauma inflicted on children in detention. These experiences can have long-lasting and devastating effects on a child's mental and emotional well-being. Sani, along with many other children, endures the psychological abuse and trauma that the laws in place are supposed to prevent. This raises profound questions about the efficacy of existing legal and protective frameworks in safeguarding the rights and well-being of children, and the extent to which children can truly find security in the very institutions meant to ensure their protection.

Additionally, children faced even more suffering within these detention centers. The testimonies of the two young detainees reveals the horrifying sexual abuses that many children suffered.

“You have to shout if someone abuses you. But at night [the victims] can’t shout” easily, because those committing the sexual violence “hold their mouth.” -Anonymous, Male, Age 16, Giwa Barracks

“Some children are sleeping in the night, but a man is stronger than him… You’ll hear, they take off their trousers and harass them. So later we gathered ourselves in a

corner. If you're lucky, you are in the corner… We children spoke about it. We said we had to be careful when we sleep…" - Anonymous, Male, Age 14, Giwa Barracks

The testimonies reflect the resilience that children in detention are often unable to voice or report abuse they experience, such as these. The perpetrators employ intimidation tactics to silence their victims, making it difficult for these children to seek help or protection. The children are also aware of the potential danger they face, particularly during the night, and are forced to take measures to protect themselves, showing the psychological impact. By detaining the children with the adults, the Nigerian military are continuously putting the children in danger. This highlights the neglect in taking measures to protect children from harm and the vulnerability of child detainees in such environments, emphasizing the importance of their testimonies in giving voice to their suffering.

This portion of the section reveals the physical and psychological abuses that many of the children faced, vividly illustrated through their testimonies. By sharing their experiences, these children shed light on the abuses and violations they face, emphasizing the lack of legal implications for those who commit these harms. These accounts play a vital role in unveiling the truth of what is happening while also demonstrating the critical importance of hearing these individual narratives.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN BOKO HARAM AND MILITARY

In this section of the chapter, I will be looking at the similarities between Boko Haram and the Nigerian Military from the perspectives of children. The two major

themes will be comparing Boko Haram and the Military, and the second theme will look at the children's point of view on loss of hope and freedom.

Comparison of Boko Haram and Military

In this portion of the section, we will be looking through the eyes of the children who found themselves caught between the horrors of Boko Haram and the confines of the Nigerian military detention camps. Unfortunately, the experiences in which they faced in the military detention camps were just as grave or worse than what they had faced with Boko Haram. Khadija, a former detainee, expressed:

"The way Boko Haram treated us, the military treated us the same."- Khadija, Female, Age 14, Giwa Barracks, Human Rights Watch

Khadija's words highlight a similarity between two seemingly opposing forces, which illustrate the striking and distressing similarity in the treatment and conditions that children experienced by the children who were detained in both Boko Haram's captivity and the Nigerian military detention camps. These words are a reality that these children encountered, where the line between the treatment they endured at the hands of Boko Haram and the military blurred into a traumatic cycle of suffering. Khadija's testimony is crucial in revealing that children, who should be under protection by the government, experience similar mistreatment and abuse as if they were under the control of a terrorist organization like Boko Haram.

Like Khadija's account, many former detainees expressed similar feelings regarding their time in detainment, in which both confinements were marked by terrible conditions and mistreatment. Fatima, a former detainee, recalls:

“I was in another kind of prison [Giwa barracks]. Every day I prayed to leave. Boko Haram treated us better”-Fatima- Female, Age 16, Giwa Barracks, Washington Post

Fatima's experience sheds light on the conditions within the Barracks. The fact that she felt that Boko Haram treated them better speaks loudly towards the impact of the conditions in these camps. Similar to other former detainees’ feelings towards their time in detention, Fatima’s testimony brings recognition to the environment that children are detained that compromises their physical and overall well-being.

In addition to the previous accounts, the testimony of an additional former detainee describes:

“The conditions in Giwa are horrible. They could make you die. There’s no place to lie down… It’s hot, all your clothes were wet, like they put you in a river… Up to now, nobody has told me why I was taken there, what I did, why I was in detention. I wonder, why did I run from [Boko Haram]?” Anonymous, Male, Age 14, Giwa Barracks, Amnesty International

The quote provided by the former detainee not only reveals the horrible conditions but brings forth a question of why they had fled Boko Haram in the first place. The reflection, "I wonder, why did I run from [Boko Haram]?" raises questions about the choices made by those attempting to escape from the terrorist organization, indicating that some may have found their situation in military detention to be hardly an improvement.

These testimonies provided in this portion of the section reveal the parallels between the trauma endured by Boko Haram and within the confines of the military

detention camps. The children's experiences from the detention camps also indicate that the conditions were either similar to or sometimes even slightly worse than the experiences they faced while in captivity with Boko Haram.

Loss of Freedom and Hope

During their time in detention, the children faced a devastating loss of freedom and hope, as Musa's account reveals:

"No one told my family I was there. When I asked if I could call, they said I shouldn't worry, that I would be released soon… I began to lose hope and feel that I wouldn't make it. I felt that I was never getting out."-Musa, Male, Age 17, Giwa Barracks, Human Rights Watch

Musa's experience is one of many similar experiences whose words vividly capture the isolation and helplessness that these young detainees experienced, as they were denied contact with their families and given false assurances of release. This combination of uncertainty and false hope further shattered their sense of security and the possibility of a brighter future, leaving them in a state of profound despair.

Another former detainee reflects:

"Maybe they were wondering whether I am alive or not. I don't know if they had any hope that I would come back."-Nurudeen, Male, Age 16, Giwa Barracks, Human Rights Watch

The uncertainty surrounding their well-being and the silence that their confinement deeply affected not only the detainees themselves but also their families who were left in agonizing suspense. This quote shows the heavy burden of separation and the shattered hopes that these young detainees, like Nurudeen, carried as they reconciled with

the emotional toll of their absence from their loved ones. The separation from their loved ones and the erosion of hope leaves these children in a state of distress and vulnerability.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I conducted an analysis of various quotes that revealed a common pattern of themes. As these themes were closely related, I categorized them into three major sections in this chapter, demonstrating that children were not adequately protected, they were mistreated, and the treatment they endured from the Nigerian military was either more severe or equivalent to the treatment they experienced under Boko Haram.

In the first section, which focused on the lack of protection of children in detention, I presented experiences where children faced a lack of justice and arbitrary detention. Accounts from former detainees shed light on a legal system where children were held without concrete reasons or evidence for their detention. These accounts highlighted the absence of justice, as the rights of children were infringed upon. They were denied legal counsel, the right to have visitors, including their parents, and contact outside the detention centers. The illegal detention of children also had far-reaching impacts on both the children and their families, resulting in emotional trauma, physical suffering, and increased vulnerability to abuse. These accounts also illustrated the profound effects on families, casting doubt on the fate of their children. Another aspect covered in this section was the common theme of death and mortality, underscoring the lack of protection for children in government custody. Through the accounts, I obtained a vivid picture of the harsh conditions the children endured, including overcrowding, inadequate medical care, and the illnesses, distress, and beatings they experienced.

The second section, which focused on the mistreatment of children in detention, heavily emphasized inhumane living conditions, stigmatization, and the physical and psychological abuse many children faced. The quotes provided vividly described the harsh realities these children endured, such as overcrowding, the absence of safe sanitation facilities, insufficient food, sweltering heat, and poor hygiene. Arbitrary detention led to false stigmatization of children as Boko Haram affiliates, subjecting them to unjust treatment and abuse within detention centers, endangering their lives. This section also detailed the physical, sexual, and psychological suffering experienced by children, as revealed in the testimonies of abuse.

The last section of this chapter focuses on the similarities between Boko Haram and the Nigerian military, providing insights from the children's perspective regarding their treatment by both groups. Testimonies show that the trauma endured by both groups was either equal or worse when it came to the treatment by the Nigerian Military. Many accounts expressed regret for trusting the government, believing they would have been better off with Boko Haram. This section also delves into the devastating loss of freedom and hope that many of these children experienced, with uncertainty about whether they would live or die.

This chapter sheds light on the numerous atrocities within detention centers and the abuses children endure. The narratives presented reveal the truth and underscore the critical importance of listening to these voices. I discovered that there is no effective legal framework in place to protect children when combating terror groups like Boko Haram. Throughout this chapter, it becomes evident that the laws designed to ensure children's security are consistently neglected by the government and pushed to the background

when dealing with suspected affiliates of Boko Haram. The laws that should be implemented by government entities, including the military, fall short in protecting children, as evidenced by the testimonies provided in this chapter. These powerful voices within this chapter expose systemic failures in upholding laws meant to prevent such events from happening to children. The children's narratives depict the alarming absence of security and care they face while in government custody.

7. CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this study, my focus was on addressing critical research questions that delved into the security concerning children and the Nigerian government. The ideas behind formulating these research questions stemmed from the realization of the essential role that security plays in the development of individuals. The research questions were based on the evident necessity of security, which many humans yearn for. Considering the challenges faced by citizens residing in conflict and terror-ridden countries like Nigeria, it becomes evident that they confront significant hardships. I wanted to investigate the legal complexities in which government entities within such countries uphold laws when facing conflict, especially when it comes to the security of children. Therefore, the following research questions were developed: To what extent do the laws and policies of the Nigerian system aim to protect children? As these policies are implemented through government entities, such as the military and police, how, if at all, do they fall short in protecting children? And when they are implementing the law and the policies in the context of anti-terrorism, specifically against Boko Haram, what does the legal plan look like in the anti-terrorism application?

These questions were designed to highlight the legal frameworks, governmental responses, and the overall landscape of child security in the challenging context of a nation dealing with conflict and instability.

The first question, "To what extent do the laws and policies of the Nigerian system aim to protect children?" is thoroughly addressed in Chapter 4, with detailed references to specific laws within the Nigerian legal system. These laws, designed to

support the rights and protections of children, demonstrate the Nigerian government's goal to safeguard children. Specifically, the laws protecting the rights and security of children are derived from the Nigerian constitution. Section 17(1)(2) establishes the foundational social order of the nation based on Freedom, Equality, and Justice, emphasizing humane actions. This sets the basic premise for the rights of people within Nigeria. Section 17(3) further extends these rights to children, highlighting the state's duty to protect them from exploitation and neglect, both moral and material. Additional laws protecting children are found within the Nigerian Childs Rights Act of 2003, outlining responsibilities for parties taking children into custody, establishing clear requirements for protecting their security and well-being, including protections against abuse and guidelines for punishments for child abuse.

The second question, "As these policies are implemented through government entities, such as the military and police, how, if at all, do they fall short in protecting children?" is addressed in Chapter 5, detailing the conditions and shortcomings of child protection within military detention, as well as Nigeria's neglect of its own laws in favor of effective results in suppressing Boko Haram. During the ongoing conflict with Boko Haram, the Nigerian Military opted to hold suspected members of the terrorist organization in military detention camps. Many of these detainees, escaping from Boko Haram-controlled areas, are former abductees from mass abductions, many of whom are children. Placing these children within the same cells as adults puts them at significant risk of abuse, directly contrasting with established laws that place responsibility for the well-being of children within the custody of the Nigerian military. These detention policies place the security of children at risk, subjecting them to unnecessary suffering

and abuse due to insufficient access to food, water, medical care, or basic amenities. The lack of enforcement of laws to protect children from harm by the same federal body that passed those laws is a direct example of the failure of these policies. This treatment inflicted upon the children is often worse than what they would have experienced under Boko Haram, negating any potential benefits from anti-terrorism efforts.

The anti-terrorism efforts implemented by the Nigerian Government to stop Boko Haram have resulted in an aggressive campaign with mixed results. This has led to a less legally restricted policy of suppression, often involving violence against the terrorist group and those suspected to be affiliated with them. Ignoring laws in the pursuit of anti-terrorism efforts has resulted in the exact consequences those laws are designed to prevent, including mass-detention policies placing children in captivity as suspected members of Boko Haram. This violates their security, placing them at risk in detention camps with insufficient necessities and exposing them to abuse from captors and other detainees. If proper laws were followed and not ignored, the treatment of children within these camps would be much different. The overall legal strategy employed by Nigeria throughout the course of this conflict largely seems to ignore its own laws in favor of Boko Haram suppression. With no consistent legal strategy, the prospect of rights and quality outcomes for those caught in the middle of the conflict between the government and Boko Haram is increasingly bleak.

The last question, "And when they are implementing the law and the policies in the context of anti-terrorism, specifically against Boko Haram, what does the legal plan look like in the anti-terrorism application?" is supported in Chapter 5 as well, where clear violations of the previously outlined laws and protections of children are not being

respected, resulting in emotional and physical harm to children. These insights regarding the series of questions involving the protection of children in Nigeria throughout the conflict between Boko Haram and the Federal Government the answers to the questions, as established through the chapters, make clear that the Nigerian government prioritized the suppression of Boko Haram over enforcing its own child protection laws. This left children vulnerable and unprotected. As a result, many were harmed.

REFLECTION

While deeply immersed in the intensive research for this comprehensive study, the challenges encountered were as varied as they were profound. The process of collecting and reviewing archival data derived from a variety of interviews proved to be an emotionally charged experience, particularly when delving into the heartbreaking narratives expressed during those interviews. The revelations surrounding the atrocities within these detention camps, with a specific focus on the distressing experiences of children, were not only deeply disturbing but also served as a tragic reminder of the harsh realities faced by the most vulnerable members of society.

The data collection process, initially undertaken with the intention of shedding light on the intricacies of the situation, gradually unfolded as a heart-wrenching and frustrating journey. The degree of human suffering, coupled with the impact of firsthand accounts, added layers of complexity to this examination. These distressing findings underscore the urgency for the Nigerian government to reassess and overhaul its current strategies in addressing conflicts.

Neglecting laws meant to ensure children's safety and resorting to unlawful detentions of children as a method to control the terror group Boko Haram make the

government complicit. These tactics highlight the government's involvement in maintaining such a critical situation, prompting questions not only about the effectiveness of current policies but also about the ethical aspects of these actions.

As the suffering and mortality rates among children held in these detentions continue to escalate, the need for decisive governmental action becomes ever more pressing. The plea is not merely to cease turning a blind eye to these unlawful convictions and abuses but to actively take responsibility for the systemic failures that have allowed these conditions to persist. Immediate and comprehensive prosecution is imperative for those overseeing these detention facilities, as their accountability is prime in ceasing the ongoing suffering endured by the detainees trapped in these alarming conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I believe it's crucial for the Nigerian government to prioritize the protection of children's rights, especially in the fight against terrorist groups like Boko Haram. I advocate for the active promotion and upholding of children's rights within detention centers, ensuring legal representation, contact with individuals outside the camps, and proper representation in court. This includes ensuring their right to legal representation, the ability to maintain contact with individuals outside the detention camps, and proper representation in court. Additionally, children should be provided with the opportunity to challenge any false accusations that may lead to their detention.

In addressing the current situation, I urge the Nigerian Federal Government to take immediate action in releasing all child detainees under 18 held in detention facilities. Moreover, there is a pressing need to improve the living conditions in these detention

centers, ensuring that they meet basic human standards. This involves providing adequate food, water, and healthcare to children in detention.

Accountability is paramount, and the Nigerian government must hold those responsible for leading detention centers accountable for any harm caused to children and other detainees. Efforts should be directed towards a thorough investigation to determine if individuals have verifiable ties to Boko Haram, implementing a fair and just process.

To prevent unwarranted detentions, the Nigerian government should establish a more effective method for verifying individuals' ties to Boko Haram. In cases where detention is deemed necessary, it should be a last resort, and children should be held in age-separated facilities to ensure their safety and well-being, all while complying with international human rights laws. This comprehensive approach is essential to safeguard the rights and security of children in the face of the complex challenges posed by groups like Boko Haram. I believe that components of civil society can take proactive measures by leveraging their policies, particularly in collaboration with the international community. They could advocate for the Nigerian government to adhere to its domestic legislation, thereby ensuring the enforcement of international laws.

FURTHER RESEARCH

I would like to propose several areas for further research to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of detention centers and related government policies. Firstly, a follow-up study on the children interviewed would be valuable, exploring their lives ten years post-release to assess the long-term effects on their well-being and lifestyles.

Another critical aspect to investigate is the psychological toll on citizens who have experienced detention. This study should delve into how such experiences have affected personal relationships and livelihoods, shedding light on the broader consequences for individuals.

Furthermore, it is essential to explore the ripple effects on families and communities affected by detention centers. Understanding community sentiments toward these facilities and the arbitrary detention of children and other community members is crucial for a comprehensive analysis.

In addition, thorough research and investigation into government policies and ethical practices during conflicts are necessary. This includes examining alternative forms of treatment towards citizens and assessing the adherence to ethical standards.

Specifically, regarding detention centers, it is crucial to gain insights into their conditions and living standards. Conducting interviews with guards to understand the criteria for punishment and assessing their moral considerations is essential. Additionally, interviewing current detainees, collecting facility footage, and presenting this data to government officials can contribute to improving conditions and treatment. This information can not only provide insights but also help in proposing alternative solutions to officials for implementing changes. This approach is crucial not only for enhancing our understanding but also for developing strategies to prevent or halt similar forms of mistreatment in other countries.

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