International Institute of Social Studies

**Coping Strategies of Women during Violent Conflict:
The Case of the Boko Haram Conflict in Nigeria**

A Research Paper presented by:

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(Nigeria)

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Major:

Human Rights, Gender and Conflict: Social Justice Perspectives
(SJP)

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The Hague, The Netherlands
December 2020

Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Maps

List of Appendices

List of Acronyms

BH	Boko Haram
BOWDI	Borno Women Development Initiative
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
CNN	Cable News Network
CPS	Centre for Peace and Security Studies-Nigeria
CR	Conciliation Resources
CRA	Child Rights Act
DSS	Department of State Service
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
HPN	Humanitarian Practice Network
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
ISWAP	Islamic State of West Africa Province
JTF	Joint Task Force
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NCBI	National Centre for Biotechnology Information
NCDC	Nigeria Centre for Disease Control
NEMA	National Emergency Management Agency
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PAWAN	Partners West Africa Nigeria
REBHI	Rehabilitation Empowerment and Better Health Initiative
SAMHSA	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
JAS	Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad
SCEUBS	Support to Coordination of EU funded interventions, Borno State
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children Emergency Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

| USA | United States of America |
| VAPP Act | Violence Against Persons Act |

Dedication:

This research is dedicated to my dear Mother, Eka David Udoette, the strongest woman I know who waged through the difficulties of the 1991 war to protect her children and to all the women who have experienced and are weathering the storms of a violent conflict. I cannot imagine your pain enough but I hope this work accounts for your voices and contribution during these hard times. This research would not have happened without you.

Acknowledgement

Abstract

This research paper stems from a deep and personal experience of a violent conflict that left its undeletable footprint in my life and that of my family. In the northeast region of Nigeria specifically Kano State, in 1992, our lives, as well as the lives of many citizens in the northeast, were torn apart by the religious conflict between Muslims and Christians. This bloody communal conflict has persisted till today though the face of the conflict has changed to pit *Boko Haram* against the Nigerian government. How women manage to survive amidst such violent conflict, how they cope and what they have to do to rebuild their lives, is knowledge relevant to understanding the impact of violent conflicts and addressing their aftermath. In struggles to build more inclusive social transformation in the developing nation of Nigeria, I draw on the struggles of women like my own mother. She survived the throes of the 1991 violence with her children, hiding in the bush for weeks without succour or aid. Somehow, she escaped with all six children and fled to the southern region, where we started a new life from scratch. This research paper thus aims to contribute to the current academic discourse on the relevance of understanding women's coping strategies during violent conflict and its applicability in conflict analysis and transformation. The pivotal point of this study is anchored on the life experiences of women in the IDP camp in Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria, which accounts will buttress an understanding of how these women cope psychologically, socially and economically within the context of their experiences of the violent conflict. However, these coping strategies recorded herein does not represent a generalized perception in the ways women cope during the violent conflict as no one individual experience is the same and conflict remains fluid, time, and place-specific. This research, however, offers a more comprehensive perspective to grasp the impact violent conflict has on women, how they cope and what actions or inactions influence their ways of coping within the context of the BH violent conflict. I want the women's accounts to be heard as such accounts are all too often left out in the public record of conflicts.

Relevance to Development Studies

Violent conflict has ravaged Nigeria for decades, with specific prevalence in the northern region, as made manifest in the *Boko Haram* Insurgency, as well as conflicts between herders and farmers. Unfortunately, no end is in sight, and the legacy of violent conflict has had a devastating impact on citizens. Many tales of survival of women are unrecorded as they have been silenced by a record that only sees and hears men. Understanding how these experiences shape the ways women coped with and respond to violent encounters is the aim of this research. This study aims to construct a more holistic notion of what is deemed as post-conflict development in today's world and how women's issues in such contexts might be better addressed.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 My Entry Point for this Study

This research paper as stated above is rooted in my personal experience of violent conflict predicated on religious differences between Muslims and Christians in Kano State, Nigeria. It is now labelled as the "zangon kataf conflict", the bloodiest communal conflict ever witnessed in 1991 which persist till today through other forms (Ladan-Baki 2015, Duniya 1996, Sandah 2013).

I started out this research with the intention of using my mother's story as a case study to explore the diverse ways women cope during violent conflict. From my childhood, her recollection of those traumatic events and her personal struggles would have helped with my research. However, my mother is not yet ready to share her story with the world and I choose to protect her. Not using her story also helped me to conduct this research objectively without any conflict of interest.

Her hesitation and pain on the other hand inspired the need to explore in-depth the effect of violence/conflict on women and how they cope using the context of the ongoing BH insurgency in Nigeria. I want the voices and accounts of the women impacted by this conflict to be heard and not silenced.

The question may be asked, why women? From a global standpoint, a report from IDMC shows that at the end of 2018, out of the estimated 41 million people recorded as facing internal displacement worldwide as a result of violence or conflict, the largest number of that population constituted women and girls (IDMC 2020:1).

Figure 1: Estimated number of women and girls internally displaced worldwide due to violence/ conflict according to age group at the end of 2018

0-4	5-14	15-24	25-59	60+
2.6 million	4.6 million	3.9 million	7.9 million	1.7 million
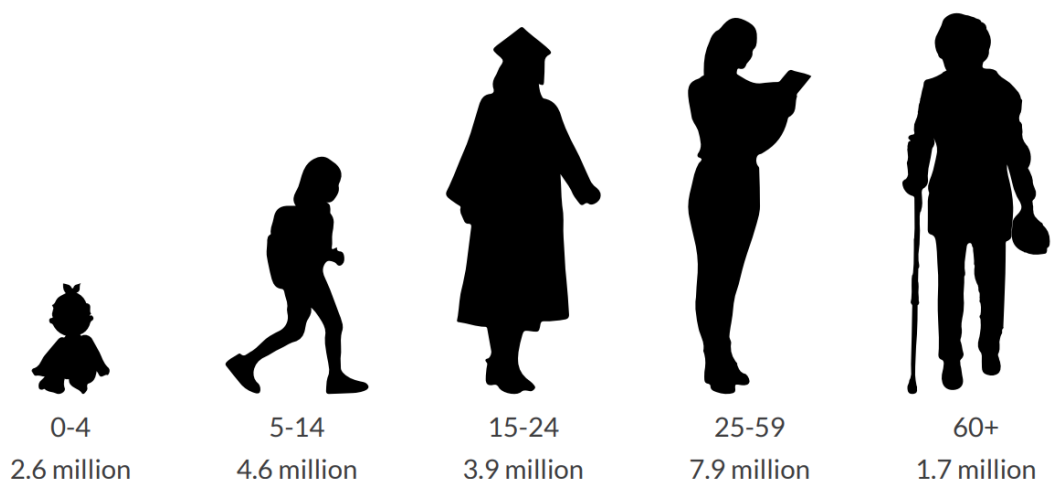
21 MILLION INTERNALLY DISPLACED WOMEN AND GIRLS

Source: (IDMC REPORT 2020:7) - https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/202003-twice-invisible-internally-displaced-women.pdf

Women face a heightened risk of abuses and violation during violence/conflict due to pre-existing discriminatory practices and structural inequalities perpetrated against them (IDMC 2020, Abdu & Shehu 2019, Amnesty 2019). Recording the experiences of women, taking into account how violent conflicts affects them and the ways they cope psychologically, economically and socially builds a holistic notion of making their voices heard and helps in addressing the aftermath of such encounters for a more sustainable transformational measure (Buvinic, Gupta et al. 2013a).

Coping in a conflict context is a multi-dimensional process which requires understanding the true nature of the conflict and its gender implications for effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Musingafi 2013). How women, men, 'sexual and gender minorities' experience and are affected by the conflict and their coping mechanisms contain relevant accounts that form part of the history of the conflict (Bouta, T. and Frerks, G. 2002).

Conflict analysis and its relevance to development studies cannot be overemphasized as conflict remains a changing dynamic which evolves with the society and always requires analysis to constantly keep in check its realities and relevance in policy and intervention measures (Tanimu, Yohanna et al. 2016). According to Hobbes and Kant, conflict is intrinsic to human nature and shapes up social order (Subasi 1975, Kant 2019). Therefore, conflict presents an opportunity to explore and understand its root causes, actions, attitudes, and behaviour that drives it. These dynamics makes or mars the transformation and development of a given society and without an understanding of the character of the conflict, a peaceful resolution would always be a far-fetched reality.

1.2 The Background: Civil Warfare in Nigeria

Nigeria has been plagued with a series of violent conflicts for many decades with the most prolonged being the ongoing *Boko Haram* insurrection (Strategic Conflict Assessment of Nigeria report 2017). BH started as a small agitation by an Islamic sect driven by their religious conviction, political aspiration and social practices that the standard for the social organization of the Nigerian society should uphold only the laws and principles set out in the Quran (Osadebe, Nnamani 2017:50). This Jihadist insurgency has lasted for over a decade since its first attack in 2009 threatening national peace and has proven to be a challenge to the Nigerian authorities (Brechenmacher 2019). In this context, the term insurgency is defined by Thomas Hayden as "an organized movement aimed at the overthrow or destruction of a constituted government through the use of subversion, espionage, terrorism and armed conflict…"(Hayden 2007:1)

This definition best describes the violent uprising of BH whose aim is to oppose the Nigerian government and impose an Islamic State (Abdu & Shehu 2019). The name 'Boko Haram' is a Hausa term coined from Arabic which connotes that western education is prohibited in Islam. The leader of the sect was Mohammed Yusuf who formed the movement in 2002. He was inspired by his mentor, the renowned cleric Sheikh Adam Ja'far in Kano State and the late Marwa of Cameroon in the 1970s who raised an army of young unemployed, uneducated youths tagged "the almajiris" in the north to oppose westernization (Samu 2012:11, ICG 2010).

Mohammed Yusuf was killed in the deadly violence in 2009 whose death led to the bloody massacre of thousands and the subsequent division of the sect into two groups officially known as "*Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad*" an Arabic phrase meaning people of the way of Prophet Mohammed (JAS) and Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) – a community of Muslims in line with the earlier generation of Muslims" now led by Abubakar Shekau and Abu Musab al-Barnawi respectively but the name Boko Haram became stuck on the insurgent sects by the community and media because of the constant use of the

term by the Islamic sect to express their opposition to western education and culture(Abdu, Shehu 2019:11, Ajayi, 2020:3, UN Security Council 2020).

Over the years, the group's membership has increased from hundreds to thousands (UN Security Council 2020). The activities of BH involves incessant killings, bombings, abductions, burning of homes and places of worship which has displaced millions of people especially in the north-eastern region of Nigeria(Brechemacher 2018, US Department of State 2014:37).

The States facing the prevalence of these attacks include Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Kaduna, Kano, Kogi, Plateau, Taraba, Yobe (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2020). States like Adamawa, Borno and Yobe recorded about 1.8 million people facing internal displacement with over 7 million across Nigeria in need of urgent aid and assistance, women constituting a large percentage of the displaced population (HRW 2020).

What is now termed as the BAY States (Borno, Adamawa and Yobe) currently records the highest and largest number of IDPs. The IDP camps are estimated to host about 1.68 million persons displaced by the Boko Haram violence, with about 528,000 IDPs situated in Maiduguri, Borno State. Current data shows that more and more, the instability and violence rise especially in the Northeast (DTM, 2020, ICRC 2016).

Figure I.2: DTM Nigeria: Displacement Tracking Matrix in areas Affected by Boko Haram Violence/conflict

Source:DTMreport(2020):
https://displacement.iom.int/system/tdf/reports/DTM%20Report%20Round%2032.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=9172
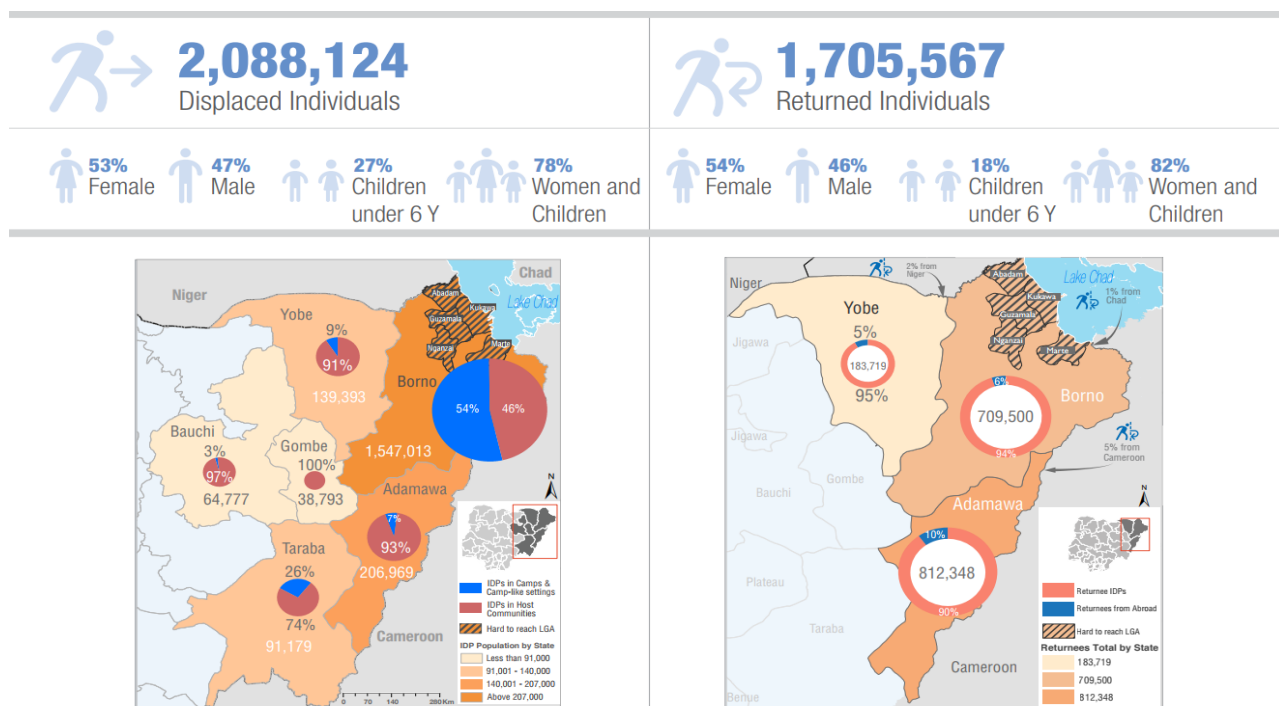
1.3 Women as viewed by Boko Haram

The adoption of women and girls as weapons and or tools for war by BH gained notoriety in 2014 when a woman walked into a military base in Gombe State and at the checkpoint

detonated the bomb bound to her body killing her and a military personnel (Bloom & Matfess 2016:1). Within the same year, BH abducted 276 Chibok girls from their school dormitories and also carried out incessant killings of Christian women like the six Christian women abducted in Maiduguri and raped. This was termed "jizya" a tax paid by Christians under Islamic law by BH" (Osadebe, Nnamani 2017:51, Watch 2014, Matfess 2017:1). Since 2014, the use of women as weapons of war by BH became a prevalent practice such that in February 2018, over 469 female suicide bombers deployed by BH were recorded with thousands losing their lives to these attacks. The rate of abductions and kidnappings of females are still on the increase (Okoli & Azom 2019:1223).

Several scholarly works and reports have given different reasonings as to why women and young girls are being weaponized or grafted into BH war. Most relate to the ideals of gender-based violence, adoption of war models by other terrorist groups, exploiting women's subjected positionings in the Nigerian society etc (Okoli & Azom 2019, Bloom & Matfess 2016, Oriola 2016, Zenn & Pearson 2014). BH used these women and young girls as sex slaves, domestic servants, forced marriages, child bearers, suicide bombers etc (Okoli & Azom 2019, Zenn & Pearson 2014). These roles are most notably predominant as a result of the embeddedness of patriarchy and women subjugation in the structuring of the Nigerian society (International Crisis Group 2016a, Alimba, Salihu 2020).

These subjugations are practised at a heightened rate in the northern region of Nigeria where women are not to be seen or heard. This is further enhanced by laws that breed inequalities against women which makes it no surprise, that Laws like the Childs Right Act, 2003 and the Violence Against Persons Act, 2015 remain un-domesticated in most northern States, including Sokoto, Kebbi, Katsina, Jigawa, Yobe, Borno, Zamfara, Kano, Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa etc. These States are also the strongholds of the ongoing BH violent conflict (Ojekunle 2020, VAPP Act, 2015, CRA 2003).

In these regions, religious and cultural norms play a key role in ordering the societal structure whether socially, politically, and economically. BH being a radicalistic Islamic movement believes in Islamic laws and principles that enforce male supremacy and relegates women to roles of caregivers and dutiful housewives (Bawa 2017, Olaide 2017). Whilst arguments certainly exist to the contrary, that the Quran accords women and men equal rights and privileges, a strict interpretation of Islamic law coupled with cultural practices in Nigeria dictated and interpreted by men, are less favourable to women (Bawa 2017). In Bawa's words

"…the fact that the law is interpreted by men, Qur'anic verses and injunctions are often read from a male standpoint that keeps the dominant both within the religious and the cultural nomenclature. Women have, therefore, been made to comply with such interpretations which though constitute symbolic violence for them and their rights to choose what is good are viewed by these women as authentic and ideal" (Bawa 2017:165).

Boko Haram since its inception in 2002 has imposed on and followed the ideals of Islam on how women and girls ought to behave and act like the way they should dress and even the kind of education suitable for them (International Crisis Group 2016b, Olaide 2017). For them, the only knowledge women and girls should learn is the Quran, which they would in turn teach their children (GCPEA 2018, Zenn & Pearson 2014). These factors attribute to the increased rate of illiteracy amongst females in the northeast as education for women and girls is deemed irrelevant and prohibited especially by the terrorist sect (GCPEA 2018, HRW 2016, UNICEF 2018). This is even portrayed in the way Abubakar Shekau, BH leader stated in one of his videos that the girls abducted would be sold as commanded by Allah (Abubakar and Levs-CNN 2014:1).

An interviewee in a recent study about how BH viewed women stated thus: "…Women are meant for men, women are regarded as our property, they can use it (sic) for…sex…they need sex. So, when they see women, they can do whatsoever sexually to them…" (Oriola 2017:9).

Emphatically, these practices culminate into the different ways BH see women. They take away women's will, power and even their right to freedom and dignity as secured by the Nigerian constitution (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999:4). Women's body has been objectified as tools to be used and dispensed with as pleased by the terrorist sect thereby imposing multiple identities on women depending on what and how they dictate what role a woman should play at a particular time example mother, suicide bomber, sexual slave, etc (Agbaje 2020:6, Oriola 2016).

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Women being the most susceptible to difficult conditions during conflicts are mostly presented as victims, weak, and in need of being protected. Hence, the non-accountability of their contributions to how they cope and survive during the conflict creates an evasion of their agency, concerns and needs in policies and conflict transformation processes (Ajayi 2020).

Violent conflict puts people in precarious situations where livelihoods are lost and means of survival become a struggle especially after being displaced (Maxwell, et al. M. 2017). How people cope or find ways to confront these challenges varies depending on the dynamics of their experiences. These accounts are pertinent to understanding holistically the impact and implication of conflict in peacebuilding and its transformational measures (Ajayi 2020). Often, recorded accounts lack in depth women's voices beyond the notions of victimhood and or perpetrators especially with the ongoing BH violence. As Ajayi describes it, 'women's experiences, needs and main concern often go unnoticed or ignored during policy making processes' (Ajayi 2020:2).

This is because, most scholarly works focus more on the victimhood or perpetration against or by women during violent conflict, thus paying less attention to understanding women's experiences of violent conflict with their various ways of coping. Indeed, women's experiences during violent conflict often are attributed to the continuous perpetration of women subjugation, violence, abuse and marginalization based on norms and institutional structures in Nigeria (Sibani 2017). However, women's experiences of violent conflict go beyond these ideologies which spurs the need to research on the different ways women confront the challenges of the conflict and how they position themselves within the context of this insurgency (Krause 2019).

Some studies have reiterated and have attempted to bring to fore the relevance of understanding the coping strategies of women during violent conflict. In a study on coping strategies of women during the Lebanese violent conflict, Usta, Farver et al. explored the impact of the war on the mental health of women and how violent conflict exacerbated domestic violence against women, forcing them to rely more on friends and family for support to cope during the conflict (Usta, Farver et al. 2008). In another study, on the Liberian war, Utas looked at women's tactics during violent conflict and how they navigated the situation, taking on different identities as coping strategies to confront challenges posed by war (Utas 2005).

In another context, Rostami explored women's experiences within the context of the Afghanistan war and how women resorted to building networks and secret organisations to cope (Rostami 2003).

These scholarly works regarding women in the context of these diverse conflict situations captured in some ways, women's experiences of the different conflicts, their diverse needs as well as their varying coping mechanisms which was mostly hinged on livelihood survival and or psychological coping with domestic violence exacerbated during the conflict

which laid a good framework on how to address the aftermath of the conflict. However, these Scholarly works in each context only tend to capture just one-dimensional approach of women coping strategies.

According to Patricia Justino, an all-inclusive intervention mechanism during violent conflict remains a challenge due to the lack of understanding of how violent conflict impacts on people differently especially women. This is what she refers to as a lack of "systematic and rigorous evidence on the differential impact of violent conflict on gender roles" (Aoláin, Cahn et al. 2018:76).

These scholarly works advance an understanding of women's experiences and the relevance of exploring women's coping strategies for an all-inclusive conflict transformation measure.

This study seeks to build on these scholarly works by proposing a more comprehensive approach on the multi-dimensional ways women cope within the context of the BH violent conflict in Nigeria; psychologically, economically and socially. This research seeks to address the following questions: How do women navigate relationships and interact with intervening agencies to access aid? Do they have access to such assistance or what ways do they improvise to take care of their needs? Who is entitled to humanitarian support? What do they have to do to qualify for such support? How do their ways of coping relate to their previous life trajectory in a patriarchal society? These are some of the questions this research seeks to address, in the context of the BH insurgency in Nigeria.

1.5 Justification and Relevance

Women are not just pawns used during the conflict, they live in and through the conflict and as Ogbozor puts it, violent conflict has damaging impacts on individuals well-being, but their will to survive is even more, as such, people find different ways to survive and protect their livelihoods, they don't just wait until help comes (Ogbozor 2016).

This research seeks to erode the one-sided notions of women as victims or perpetrators during the violent conflict but to expand the fora on understanding the experiences of women and account for their voices and their ways of coping during violent conflict. Conflict sometimes present opportunities that take women out of the sphere of victimhood and or perpetrators (Universidad Complutense de Madrid 2018). It may present women with the opportunity to navigate relationships or interactions with their current environment as a survival strategy like their interaction within the IDP Camps or outside the IDP camps, the humanitarian aid agencies, aid workers, families within or outside the internally displaced person camps or even their interactions with the insurgent sect (Boko Haram) (Utas 2005).

The North-eastern region of Nigeria is a patriarchal society where women subjugation and dominance are upheld based on cultural and religious beliefs which ideology transcends even into the ongoing violent conflict. Women are used as 'pawns and objects' of war stemming from this patriarchal notion and as such, it is pertinent to examine their experiences and explore their varying ways of coping within the context of this violent conflict (Zenn, Pearson 2014).

These patriarchal practices did not just occur during violent conflict. They are ingrained in the structure of the society, and as such, they are norms which have shaped lives, roles and expectations of men, women, children within the society, more so in these conflict-affected areas. Gender, therefore, plays a vital role in the way women and men are affected during this conflict (Aoláin, Cahn et al. 2018). Having established the subservient position in which the societal structure places women, which escalates even more during conflict or crisis. How women navigate these roles within the context of this crisis or the fluidity of

6

roles they have had to assume in the context of this violent conflict beckons an understanding (Agerberg, Kreft 2020).

More so, gender mainstreaming has become a priority within the development framework to address gender inequalities. This framework is to ensure that women's perspectives are incorporated into aspects of program designs and policies (Brookings Institution Washington 2014:6). It is within this framework that this research seeks to bring to fore the voices of women in the northeast impacted by the BH violent conflict and their coping strategies. Examining the various ways women build their psychological, economic and social mobility within this violent conflict elucidates how women's experiences shape their lives and theirs ways of coping, or how they tailor or are made to tailor their experiences to shape how they are seen by the intervening agencies to get or access aid (Hilhorst, Porter et al. 2018).

This study seeks to build women's accountability and contribution within the context of this violent conflict; understand the nuances of their experiences and how it has shaped their ways of coping and its implications to policy interventions which continues to fail due to the lack of accountability taken (Akinwale 2010).

1.6 Objectives and Questions

This study seeks to investigate the multi-dimensional ways women in the northeast cope with the ongoing BH insurgency in Nigeria. In doing this, the varying and different experiences of these women will be explored to understand the ways they resort to confronting the challenges posed by this insurgency. This study will not only enable an understanding of the individual coping mechanisms utilized by these women but will inform how they rebuild their lives going forward whether psychologically, economically, socially and what influences these actions.

Main Research Question

How do women in the North-East of Nigeria cope with the ongoing Boko Haram violent conflict?

Sub questions:

1. How has the Boko Haram violent conflict-affected women in the North-East of Nigeria?
2. How do women cope psychologically, economically and socially with the ongoing BH violent conflict?
3. How do their ways of coping relate to their previous life trajectory living in a patriarchal society?
4. In what ways do the intervening measures by humanitarian agencies influence women coping strategies?

1.7 Chapter Outline

This paper has six chapters. After the overview, which establishes the scope of the study, its relevance to development studies and keywords, Chapter 1 presents the contextual background relevant to understanding Boko Haram violence as a case study and women's pivotal position in the BH ideology, the justification, statement of the problem, the main objective and questions this research seeks to answer. Chapter 2 explores the methodological approaches and sets out the methods used for data collection to answer the research questions. The limitations, and the researcher's positionality and reflexivity are also discussed. Chapter

3 then presents the theoretical and conceptual framework and then connects this with the impact of the BH violence on women in chapter 4. Chapter 5 presents the main findings and lays out some possible answers to the research questions. Chapter 6 finally presents the main takeaway of this research, including conclusions and entry points for policy interventions with women in conflict-affected contexts.

Chapter 2 **Methodology, Methods and Data Collection**

"The truth is that too often many people living in conflict don't get asked for their perspectives and ideas. And too often no-one is prepared to really listen. But in the same way that companies or businesses depend on feedback from their clients, listening to people about their experiences of insecurity and what could be done to make them feel safer is crucial for tailoring support to people in conflict-affected contexts to their own identified needs – not the ones we assume for them" (CR 2018:1)

2.1 Introduction

This research paper utilized a qualitative methodology and composite systematic data approach. The choice of methodology for this research is because of its suitability in analysing and understanding different perceptions and concepts especially in describing behaviours, experiences etc which is salient to this research (Thomas 2016). This study relates to women's experiences of how they cope during violent conflict and experience cannot be quantified which makes a qualitative approach most applicable.

Also applying the composite systematic data approach is because the topic of the research centres around an ongoing violent conflict, as such, a single effective research design becomes difficult to apply (Guevara, Boas 2020, Barakat, Chard et al. 2002, Ford, Mills et al. 2009).

Using this approach enables the researcher to explore different methods and theories of obtaining data including gathering qualitative data from primary and secondary sources to enhance the reliability of the findings. These different data sources complement each other's strengths and weaknesses, eliminating bias and circumventing the problem of access amongst other challenges to actualize the aim of this research (Barakat, Chard et al. 2002).

In achieving the goal of this research, I chose to conduct focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and use one key informant life history trajectory as a medium to answer the research questions. FGD because it gives a better understanding of a subject matter drawing on different views, attitudes, and meanings. It enables the researcher to gather more information within a short period of time (Copley Focus 2012). In-depth interviews provide an opportunity to obtain more detailed information to address the research objective (Pathfinder International 2006). Life history trajectory to understand if the women's medium of coping is influenced by initial attitudes and behaviours shaped prior to the conflict (Bernardi et al., 2019).

2.2 Research Ethics: Approaching the COVID field

Knowing that this research cannot be substantiated without evidencing the experiences of the women in the northeast affected by this insurgency and for them to share their coping strategies in their own voice, I took into consideration a number of factors required in conducting research within an ongoing violent conflict and the Covid-19 pandemic (Moss et al., 2019). These factors were:
a) Finding a research assistant conversant with the terrain; language, socially, and culturally.
b) How to get in contact with the research participants.
c) How to guarantee the safety of both participants and research assistant during this conflict and the pandemic
d) How to access the IDP camps and obtain the prerequisite consent
e) The willingness of the participants to be interviewed in the heat of the ongoing crisis.

f) How to avoid psychological harm and further stress for the research participants.

g) What to give back to the respondents.

To address the above factors, it became pertinent to obtain formal permission from the Institution on the possibility of using a research assistant to conduct fieldwork within the ongoing circumstances. Information was sourced from the NCDC report on the current situation of the crisis in Nigeria especially in Borno State the area of focus for the research. Guidelines on safety procedures to be followed and the number of people allowed in a particular space was also looked into (NCDC Report 2020). From the report, I was able to make an informed decision to situate my research to women participants only within the IDP camps reducing harmful exposure to the pandemic and or unnecessary movement for the research assistant. The camps selected where Bakassi camp, Teachers Village Camp and CAN all within Maiduguri, Borno State.

To get the research assistant, I reached out to old classmates and colleagues residing in the northeast who gave the contact of the team leader, support to the coordination of EU funded interventions in Borno State (SCEUBS). Through this contact, I was provided three field research assistants that knew the terrain, understood the language, and worked with the women within the already mentioned IDP camps. Safety gears like; face mask, hand sanitizer was made available for the research team. To access the women in the camp, the researcher was required to provide incentives that would make the women comfortable and willing to partake in the research process. Their main challenge was food and for them, investing time in the interviews deprived them the opportunity of going to source for their daily needs. As such, cash transfers were made to the research assistant to provide lunch for the participants to make them comfortable and willing to participate in the FGDs and KIIs.

Age: To stay within the guidelines, women within the following age brackets were considered: Young women between the age of 18-30 years, Middle-aged women between the age of 31 – 50 years and finally, elderly women; 51 years and above. This research seeks to share the experiences of women within these age categories to give them a platform for their voices to be heard and to account for their ways of survival during this violent conflict.

Consent: The interviews with the women got delayed surprisingly because of the Sallah holidays, a context that will be addressed subsequently in my analysis. This holiday took more than two weeks out of this as the research assistants struggled to get the participants together and ready for the focus group discussions. Each participant's consent was sought and obtained through a request for a consent letter sent by the researcher before the discussions or interviews began. All data obtained assured anonymity of research participants to ensure their safety and respect their privacy, as the subject matter is quite sensitive.

Language: The language for FGDs and in-depth interviews was Mungonu, a local language in the northeast. For the aid workers and NGO representatives interviewed, the language of communication was English. The researcher prepared the questionnaires, the research assistants asked the questions in the local dialect to the women participants and translated the responses in the English language to the researcher.

2.3 Sources of Data

2.3.1 Primary Sources

Primary sources as explained extensively above were obtained through conducting 3 focused group discussions sharing the number of participants to 9 – 10 persons per group. In-depth interviews were conducted selecting 2 participants each from the FGDs, and then 1 key informant's life history. The selection of the participants was random using the snowball approach due to the sensitivity of the subject matter being an ongoing experience in a conflict context (O'Leary, Z. 2017:503). It, therefore, was important to look for volunteers then ask the volunteers to reach out to others who were willing to share.

Aid workers and representatives of NGOs whose work focuses on the violent conflict and its impact on women in the northeast were interviewed using a semi-structured

methodology (open-ended questions) (O'Leary, Z. 2017). They include the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Centre for Peace and Security Studies, the rule of law and empowerment initiative – Partners West African Nigeria, National Emergency Management Agency.

Table 1.1 Breakdown of sample population and data collection methods

Interview category	Source/Location	No. of participants	Age group
Focused group Discussion	Bakassi IDP Camp- Matte community	9 10 10	18-30 31-50 51 >
✓	Teachers Village - IDP camp- Gwoza Community	9 9 9	18-30 31 – 50 51 >
✓	Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)-IDP camp	9 9 9	18 – 30 31 – 50 51>
In-depth Interviews	Bakassi Camp, Teachers Village, CAN Camp	2 participants from each camp.	18-30, 31-50, 51>
Key Informant Interview	CAN- IDP Camp	1	55

Table 1.2 Breakdown of Research participants- Humanitarian Actors

Category	Source	No. of Participants	Method of data Collection
Aid Workers	Rehabilitation Empowerment and Better Health Initiative (REBHI)	3	Questionnaire/ Email
	Peace Ambassadors Center for Humanitarian aid and Empowerment	1	✓
	El-Kanemi Memorial Foundation	1	✓
Humanitarian Agencies/Research Institutes interviewed	Partners West Africa Nigeria	2	Skype Interview
	Centre for Peace and Security Studies-Nigeria	1	WhatsApp call
	Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution -Nigeria	1	WhatsApp Call

From the above tables, 3 FGDs were conducted limiting the number of participants to 9 or 10 due to Covid safety regulations, a total of 3 focus groups were held, one for each age category. The total women participants for this research were 32 according to the different categories shown in table 1.1. Pseudonyms were adopted to clearly express the different stories of these women so as not to create confusion and to protect the identity of the participants.

I decided to frame my questions in simple and understandable ways because a large number of the target population are illiterate, therefore, the term 'coping' or 'strategy' was not mentioned so as not to confuse the women with these vocabularies. With this choice, this research was able to apprehend the distinct ways the BH violent conflict affected the women and their survival strategies (Jayasundara-Smits 2012). This structure was taken to ensure free flow in the conversation.

Asides the field work conducted by the research assistants, I used phone calls, skype video calls and emails to conduct interviews with the humanitarian aid actors; and drafted questionnaires for those not available for virtual meetings. Participants had the flexibility of choosing what medium was most convenient for them. Again, consent to record and use their responses was first sought and obtained before any conversation ensued.

Recorded or documented interviews of different women affected by the conflict as captured by NGO's and journalist were also obtained. All these different sources of information gathered was to ensure the research data collected is independent to ascertain its authenticity. An analysis of the stories from discussions held helped with understanding

these women's experiences against the theoretical lenses of gender, structural/cultural violence, and its weighing impact on their coping mechanisms.

2.3.2 Secondary sources

Scholarly literature, NGO official reports, books and other academic publications, and reputable news sources and internet-based resources were consulted on relevant topics. Based on the limitation of conducting in-person fieldwork, an alternative means of understanding the various experiences of women during the conflict was to explore various works of literature documenting the experiences of women affected by the BH insurgency; and ways women responded to, and survived such civil conflicts (O'Leary, 2017).

2.3.3 Data Analysis/ Data Collection

With the amount of data collected and as a way to stay connected to this research, I used a thematic analysis approach which involved reading through and listening to each interview and responses to help make sense of the data, organize the data. The research assistant helped in transcribing the data of the women participants from local Mungonu language to English Language and grouped the participants' responses according to each question asked. The information obtained from NGO representatives/aidworkers were transcribed by the researcher and their responses re-confirmed. I then picked out connecting words used by the participants to create themes used to explain clearly their different coping mechanisms (Mortensen 2018).

2.4 Limitations

The real limitation in the conduct of this research as pointed out above is the travel restriction in conducting in-person fieldwork because of the Coronavirus pandemic. This means that the one on one interviews envisaged by visiting the women in these conflict areas,

listening to them, building connections with them to get them comfortable enough to share their stories and how they coped has taken a big chunk out of these research and has led to the resort of conducting this research through a composite data approach as shown above.

One of the limitations seen in this approach is the potential limitation of the works of literature, NGO's report and similar agencies documenting the women's stories from angles that best represent the interest of their organization. This would mean that certain information or accounts as told by these women may not have been captured in these reports, works of literature and documentaries or may not be a true representation of their experiences.

Language was also a barrier as the researcher had to resort to using a research assistant to help with the communication with the research participants especially the women and transcription of their responses. This meant that the researcher cannot ascertain completely that the translation of the question and responses represents the exact response of the researcher and the research participants. There is also a limitation of time to conduct this research. The time given based on the study program is not enough to conduct extensive research regarding the subject matter.

Another challenge faced in obtaining the data was that the research participants even though consented to be recorded found it hard to be open. As such, from the poor response during the first recorded FGD, the recording had to be stopped to enable the participants to be open and speak freely. The research assistant had to resort to typing the response of the participants to each question asked which made the process slow on one hand but also helped in transcribing faster, authenticating the participants' response as they had to re-confirm what was typed as their response to each question.

Another potential limitation in this research was time expended to gain access to the aid workers, NGOs, Journalist that have already interviewed or worked with women affected by this conflict to gather the required data to substantiate this research. This was quite challenging and as such, the researcher could only do so much within the given time frame.

2.5 Positionality/Reflexivity

The positionality of the researcher in the conduct of this research is a combination of both insider and outsider. Outsider being that I conducted this research through a research assistant due to my inability to travel to conduct the fieldwork in person, limited by time, space, place and language. However, from the insider point, being born in the northeast and having lived through a violent conflict before, my experience helped my understanding of how to approach my target population. I shared a brief summary of my experience as a child that witnessed a violent conflict in the request for consent letter sent through the research assistants with the women to make them understand my position as a researcher being someone that could relate with their experiences.

This afforded me easy access to the target participants being women. It was easy to build a good rapport with the research assistants and they were easily accepted by the research participants, their position as workers within the camps, being empathetic with the women's plight in the camps helped them communicate freely.

However, this positionality also created a challenge for me as a researcher struggling to stay unbiased in the interpretation of the information or create possible difficulties in separating the opinion of the researcher as it relates to the conflict and the information as being told. To address this bias, the use of the research assistant helped to have an objective position in the conduct of the interviews and the reconfirmation of data obtained by respondents helped keep out any personal opinion or bias.

2.6 Conclusion

These different sources as listed and explained above will be used to substantiate this research and give credence to the analysis of women's coping mechanisms within the context of the BH violent conflict in Nigeria.

Chapter 3 **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

3.1 Introduction

Having understood from a general standpoint the impact of violent conflict on lives and livelihood and its grievous effect on women; this chapter examines how the BH violent conflict in northeast Nigeria affects women; the ideology that drives the conflict and why the focus is on women. It is observed that the way violent conflict affects women depends partly on the pre-existing and contextual gender relations, structural and cultural practices. Understanding the dynamics of this violent conflict will be analysed through the theoretical lens of coping within the enhanced framings of gender -hegemonic masculinity and structural violence. These will give a broadened perspective on the subject and shape the focus point of this research on how women cope with the challenges posed by this insurgency.
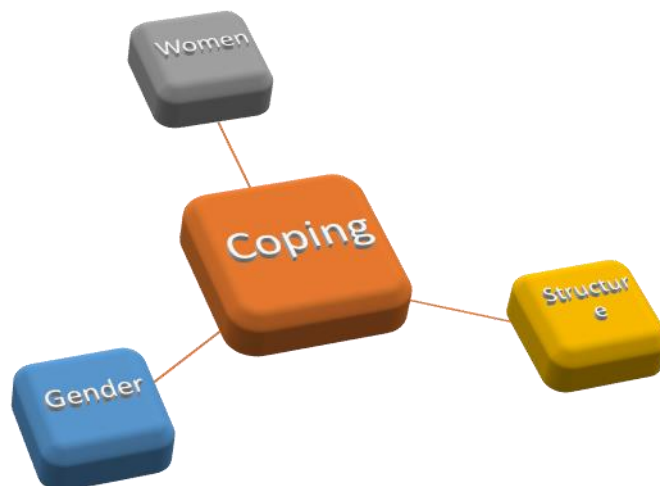
3.2 Gender as a Useful Category of Analysis – Hegemonic Masculinity

Though the focus of this research is on women and understanding how they cope during violent conflict, it is critical to note, that recognizing the context and role which women play within the BH insurgency cannot be explained outside the acknowledgement of other sexed bodies. This is because talking about women invariably signifies the study of the other (Scott 1986). However, this is not also about just men and women and how their experiences of conflict differ; this is about understanding the role institutions, ideologies, identities, and symbolic framings drive the way in which women are perceived in the context of this insurgency and the power relations in play that graft women into this violent conflict.

Gender offers a deconstruction of social constructs, traits, positions, actions, responsibilities and needs assigned to people in a given society mostly portrayed through one's masculinity or femininity, time and place-specific (UNDP 2016). It is about social power relations, who has control and who is at the receiving end. Women's oppression and marginalisation did not just begin during the conflict rather, it is a systemic practice that has long been ingrained to become a norm in the roles that women play in the Nigerian society.

Gender inequality is not affected only in the distribution or access to resources but also through norms and stereotypes reinforced by gendered identities, symbols, ideologies that constrains the

behaviour of women and men which manifests inequalities (UNDP 2015). This usually pertains to roles of child-bearing and nurturing though not limited to these roles. Women and girls are mainly responsible for informal work, which is usually unpaid (Zenn, Pearson 2014, Fapohunda 2012). According to Ajayi, "Gender inequality manifests in Nigeria's *politicosphere* as a deeply held belief by many…that men are superior to women and leadership is a man's business" (Ajayi, T. 2019:1). A vivid example of this is shown in the table below:

Figure 2: Nigeria's Gender Gap
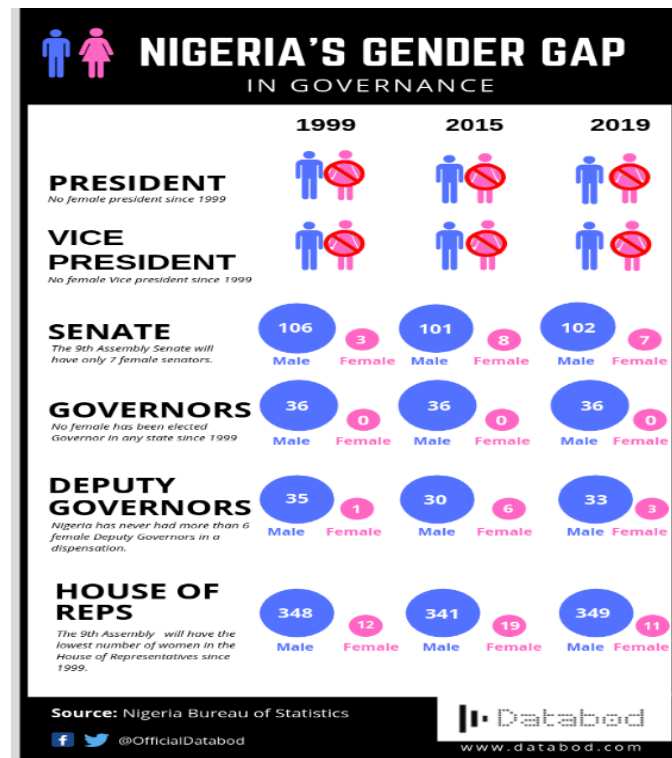
Source: National Bureau of Statistics 2019

The roles and way of lives in this region are imposed and determined by men, what they say goes and women are just supposed to obey and perform their duties without questions (Zenn, Pearson 2014, Buvinic, Gupta et al. 2013a). This is what is termed by Connell as "hegemonic masculinity" which is a "pattern of practices that normalizes men's dominance over women" (Connell 2005: 844).

This framework will therefore be used to analyse how women cope with these framings. It will help in answering the questions of this research including what roles women have had to undertake to assuage their needs or challenges faced during this violence; how this violence impacts their psychological, social, and economic wellbeing, and how they navigate their positionality within this gendered notions.

3.3 Structural, Cultural and Physical Violence

According to Galtung, violence is made manifest where there is a deprivation of a need and there is a clash of interest in the actualization of a potential need. In his words "violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations" (Galtung, J. 1969:168). In Galtung's view, the longing of every human is to satisfy basic needs usually encompassed in four different

dimensions: identity, survival, well-being and freedom (Galtung 1969). These needs produce the attitudes and behaviours that drive human interaction and lead to the divisions in the society based on categorizations of people according to class, race gender etc. These divisions entrench a structure creating inequalities; discriminatory practices, marginalization and social exclusion within the society and human relations (UNDP 2015). Societal institutions promote structural violence. These understandings are advanced through traditions and cultures that are generational and limits certain individuals from being fulfilled (Bruneau 2018:2).

Poverty, corruption and bad governance fostered the emergence of the insurgent sect BH, through their unsatisfaction with the under-development and corrupt practices of the Nigerian government and the quest to enthrone Islam as the predominant religion in Nigeria (Campbell, J and Harwood, A. 2018). The question is why women?

Asides the overwhelming fact that women are groomed from birth especially in the northeast to be wives and caregivers, violence against women is seen as a norm hence the long list of cases of domestic violence perpetrated against women which are silenced without repercussions. It is even said, that when a man beats a woman, it is done out of love and to discipline her (Obaji 2018, Zenn, Pearson 2014).

Even more evident is the fact that, till date, States in Northern Nigeria still has not domesticated the Violence against Persons Act, passed since 2015 which vividly protects, prohibits, and punishes violence and abuses against women (Durojaiye 2020, VAPP Act 2015).

Structural violence is embedded in unequal power relations, mostly seen in distribution, control and access to resources and opportunities (Bruneau 2018). The mere split in roles amongst men and women in the society enforcing male dominance breeds injustice which exacerbates during the conflict. This, in turn, leads to a symbolic order where hegemonic masculinity becomes heteronormative; "men are supposed to be strong, courageous, attracted by "sexy" women, and so on, and they are also invited to suppress or control "feminine emotions" (Bruneau 2018:2). The state and institutions play a vital role in sustaining this unequal power structures which reinforce patriarchy and gender-based violence.

This theory will be used to examine the distinct ways structural and cultural practices operate to perpetrate violence against women and how women cope with these structures.

3.4 Reviewing and theorising Coping

A plethora of literature has shown that when people encounter stressful or traumatic events, it impacts on their psychological well-being (NCBI 2014, SAMHSA 2019, Walinga 2014). A person's reaction to such incidence is largely influenced by some factors including,

"the gravity and impact of the experience, individuals age, vulnerability, personal and family history, cultural background, presence or absence of support system, coping mechanism and resilience" (HPN Report 2017:1).

Previous exposure to such circumstance may likely build a strong base for the survivor to take more control of such a situation. On the other hand, the lack of experience of such encounter may receive a reaction of shock or numbness and impact the individual's mental wellbeing (Usta, Farver et al. 2008, NCBI 2014, HPN Report 2017). They either vent emotionally or focus on finding means to solve the problem associated with this stress.

Several scholars suggest that extended armed conflict may have a more disastrous effect on women than men even aggravating psychological distress caused by the continuous conflict (Usta, Farver et al. 2008:794). This heightened tendency on women's wellbeing often

relates to their already unequal and disproportionate placement in the societal structure which condition worsens in the context of the violent conflict (Rostami 2003).

The BH insurgency has pushed women into changing roles, many have moved away from the structured norm of caregivers and nurture to become head of households, providers, fighters etc as shown in chapter 4 of this study. How do women cope with these changing realities? (International Crisis Group 2016a). Violence takes a toll on people affected and even after it ends, it does not leave them in the same sphere prior to when it started (Oriola 2017). As such understanding these changing realities prior, during and after shapes a holistic view on how best to tackle the outcome of conflict situations (Folkman, Lazarus et al. 1986).

3.4.1 Understanding Coping

Lazarus and Folkman developed a concept widely used as a threshold in understanding the term coping (Folkman, Lazarus et al. 1986). According to Folkman, coping is defined as "thoughts and behaviours that people use to manage the internal and external demands of situations that are appraised as stressful" (Folkman 2010:902). Stress, on the other hand, a word introduced by Hans Selye (1956) is defined "as *a significant life event or change that demands response, adjustment, or adaptation" (Selye in (Walinga 2014:1).* When faced with stressful encounters, the ability to overcome the encounter is often driven by hope. This is what Folkman defines as "the yearning for the amelioration of a dreaded outcome…" (Folkman 2010:902) Hope generates the will, the state of mind that motivates action.
This research will also use the life course approach to understand how women's ways of the coping stem from decisions, attitudes and behaviours that have occurred over time. Life-course is seen "as a multifaceted process of individual behaviour; that is, it evolves from the steady flow of individuals' actions and experiences, which modify their biographical states" (Bernardi et al., 2019:2, Hart 2017). The point is, women especially in the northeast of Nigeria were born into these social constructs, their identity, attitudes, behaviours are shaped by ideologies of subjugation and hegemonic masculinity. Women and men know their place, men dominant, women subordinate (Oriola 2017). These are norms that have been inculcated as a lifestyle which is why the sudden rise in women speaking up against these inequalities have met serious oppositions, like the #ArewaMetoo movement in the northeast were women shared horrific experiences of being sexually abused was seen as shaming Islam mostly by the men, as women ought to be silent (Saulawa 2019, Unah 2019).
Understanding how these women cope, drawing from their prior biographical experiences in co-relation to their experiences of this violent conflict shapes how their life course has influenced their coping strategies. This in turn will expose their sustainability or otherwise within the ongoing violence. It's like connecting the past to the present (Bernardi, Huinink, et al., 2019). Lazarus and Folkman further espoused that coping can be expressed in diverse ways but usually emotion or problem-focused (Folkman, Lazarus et al. 1986).
Analysing these women's experiences of the violent conflict through these theoretical lenses will validate which perspective drives their coping strategies based on the outcome of their actions whether positive or negative.

3.5 Conclusion

From the above, the obvious fact is that women are not only confronted with unequal power relations but also the violence perpetrated against them are legitimized by structures of the State. These structural inequalities prompt the need to explore how women cope within these narrow and dominating roles, magnified within the context of this violent conflict whether they accept, confront the diverse challenges and or seek escape, avoidance or denial of these impacts which may lead to a negative or positive outcome.

Also, these women have prior to the conflict lived with unequal and discriminatory practices levelled against them, which the BH violence only heightened. How these different

levels translate to the ways women cope psychologically, economically and socially is what this research seeks to analyse through these theoretical frameworks.

How has the BH violent conflict affected women?

Chapter 4 **Violence: Its Impacts on Women**

4.1 Introduction

Understanding how women cope during violent conflict requires an in-depth knowledge of how the conflict affected them. This chapter, therefore, presents reports and recorded accounts of the shared experiences of women affected by the BH violence. This will provide an avenue to understanding the different roles and challenges they faced. It is, however, most salient to note that there is no homogeneous impact of violent conflict on women. Each narrative is specific to each individual depending on their encounters and the outcomes (Chowdhury 2019).

4.2 Recorded Accounts Of The Impact Of The Boko Haram Violence On Women

The BH violent conflict led to displacement and loss of livelihood for millions including women. Many have had to rely on aid from humanitarian agencies or host communities to survive (Erong 2017). However, these resources are limited due to the upsurge in the number of displaced people and their diverse needs. Nigeria's displacement records stand at 2, 583,000 as at the end of 2019(IDMC report 2019). Studies show that, in 2015, more than 53% of the internally displaced people affected by the BH insurgency are women as against the 47% that are men (Osadebe, Nnamani 2017:53, Brechenmacher 2019, Afu 2019:19). The report show that Bakassi Camp, the oldest IDP camp hosts about 34, 232 displaced person (OCHA 2020). Women and girls constitute more than half of this population with the numbers still increasing nearing the maximum capacity of the camp (OCHA 2020).

According to UNOCHA report, about 100,000 people do not have access to humanitarian actors or aid due to the high level of insecurity in their areas, most of that population constituting women (HRW 2020:16). NGO and UN report also show that many women are marginalized during the distribution process especially female-headed households, single women etc due to the ideologies of male dominance and men being seen as the providers for their families (UN women Nigeria, CARE Nigeria, OXFAM 2020, UNHCR 2018).

According to Mooney, "Women… typically makeup majority of the internally displaced populations and face a range of particular risks; heightened levels of sexual and gender-based violence, are prevalent among single unaccompanied women and girls as well as women heads of household" (Mooney 2005:17). HRW documented about 43 women and girls in Maiduguri IDP camps sexually exploited in 2016. Protection sector workers also reported an alarming rate of sexual abuse in 14 camps of the 26 sites in Borno State (Nextier 2020). These are just the reported cases.

4.3 More Specific Impacts

Physical Abuse/Domestic/religious slavery:

The physical abuse, imposition of religious belief and subjection to domestic roles are some of the ways women are used by BH. A 15-year-old girl as recorded by HRW had this to say:

"They added more and more piles of clothing and other items stolen from homes and shops they looted before setting on fire each village they passed until I thought I would collapse from the weight of the load. I was relieved when two more girls were abducted in another village. They took over some of the goods I was carrying" (HRW 2014:27).

In another instance, the leader of the insurgent sect, Abubakar Shekau in a video made sometime in May 2014, had this to say about the abduction of the Chibok girls*: "We would also give their hands in marriage because they are our slaves. We would marry them out at the age of nine. We would marry them out at the age of 12" (HRW 2014:31).*

A woman abducted in Gwoza recounted how she was beaten mercilessly by BH because of her religion (Christianity) and how she was forced to convert to Islam so she won't get killed *(HRW 2014:29)*.

Another 15-year-old told her story of being raped continuously at gunpoint after her forceful marriage to a member of the terrorist sect, a memory she says left her bitter and in pain *(HRW 2014:34)*. These stories corroborate the description of structural violence as espoused by Bruneau where societal institutions through traditions uphold and promotes a culture of violence, marginalization and unequal power relations (Bruneau 2018:2). This vividly describes the structure of the Nigerian society where the ascription of subservient roles to women and their subjugation have been normalized (Zenn & Pearson 2014). Boko Haram exploited the positionality ascribed to women as being caregivers, weak, sexual objects and people that need to be controlled to execute their war tactics (International Crisis Group 2016b, Matfess 2017, Okoli 2019, Oriola 2017).

The northeast records the highest cases of violence against women and girls ranging from domestic violence, sexual abuse etc (Taft 2015). More evidently, the Penal Code, Section 55(1) (d) applicable in the northern region of Nigeria legitimizes men beating their wives as a form of correction (Penal code 1960, Zenn, Pearson 2014). Also, the criminal code has stringent provisions in the prove of rape and even refuses to recognize spousal rape as a crime(Peju 2019). These factors validate the continuous perpetration of violence and abuse against women.

Mental torture:

Studies have shown that women, based on their subjectiveness to these prevailing abuses and traumatic experiences whether directly or indirectly during violent conflict develop posttraumatic stress symptoms six times higher than men (Tolin & Fao 2006:1, Usta, Farver, et al., 2008). The causes of stress for women include; "social displacement, gender-based violence, hunger and deplorable health conditions" (Abdu & Shehu 2019:1).

For instance, Catherine was forced to witness the death of her husband and watched her children separated from her. She says the death of her husband will haunt her forever (Offiong & Pontifex 2019).

Another vivid case is that of Gana, a woman who became saddled with the responsibility of 11 children due to the death of her husband to Boko Haram and the escape of the other wives leaving her alone with their children. She suddenly became saddled with the responsibility of becoming a provider and head of household. Her struggle to provide food and shelter amidst her traumatic experience of the violence and the stigmatization of being a widow in the northern region left her emotionally drained and constantly worried (Al Jazeera - Oduah 2015).

These experiences clearly show that violence has a myriad of consequences which is not only physical but impacts also on the mental wellbeing of persons affected. The impact of violence though may have started out physically, eventually transcends into other spheres of life including the burden of treating psychological or mental illness; the tendency of transferring the aggression experienced to others like children; and the sudden loss of livelihood may lead to negative resorts (Sinha 2013). These women are thus not only battling the physical impact of the violence but also must deal with its traumatic impact psychologically even to their economic and social welfare.

Weapon of warfare:

BH has used women in different ways, one of such being weaponizing the body of women to execute their war tactics. According to a UNICEF report, out of the 83 suicide bombers used by BH in January 2017, 55 were girls and 27 boys (UNICEF 2017:1).

Also as documented by HRW, one of the women said:

"…I was told to approach a group of five men we saw in a nearby village and lure them to where the insurgents were hiding. Afraid because of the killings I had witnessed during the operation, I told the young men, mostly teenage members

of the Civilian JTF, that I needed their help. When they followed me for a short distance, the insurgents swooped on them. Once we got back to the camp, they tied the legs and hands of the captives and slit the throats of four of them as they shouted 'Allahu Akbar…'" (HRW 2014:26).

In another instance, one of the women said:

"At first, my job in the camp was to cook for the 14-man group until a month later when I was taken along for an operation. I was told to hold the bullets and lie in the grass while they fought" (HRW 2014:26).

The assumed gentle nature of women by society makes BH exploit their bodies as weapons effective in executing their attacks without suspicion. They deem it their right to use and dispose of women as they please (Agbaje 2020). This is shown in the way women have been and are used as weapons of war during the violence (HRW 2014).

4.4 Conclusion

Many of the women, as shown above, have experienced the death of their loved ones, lost their source of survival and have faced double victimhood between being abducted by the terrorist sect and the hardships they faced after and or the adverse effect of the violence on their wellbeing (Amnesty International 2018, Campbell, and Harwood, 2018, International Crisis Group 2016a, Okoli, 2019, Oriola 2017). These experiences have also put women in roles other than their presupposed positions as mothers, caregivers and nurturers like the case of women used as suicide bombers, becoming heads of households and providers amongst others. These accounts necessitate the need to understand how women cope with the impacts of these experiences.

Chapter 5 How We Survive: Women Coping with War

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on bringing to fore the different coping strategies of women affected by the BH violent conflict ranging from psychological, economic, social and their day to day survival. This chapter will apply one life history to analyse how women's prior experiences shape their ways of coping during violence/ conflict. It is also relevant to examine the role of institutions and intervening agencies and their influence or otherwise on ways women cope. This chapter, therefore, accounts for the voices of these women and illustrates how their experiences of the violent conflict impact their ways coping.

5.2 "Nothing prepares you for war"

Many accounts of the women started with how the Boko Haram violence took them unawares such that they did not have time to think or plan. All they could think about was just surviving the moment without getting killed. From the findings, 32-year-old Hadiza shared thus:

"It was like a dream, I was cooking the family dinner with my 15-year-old daughter when I heard my husband who was sitting outside with my 3 boys scream Hadiza run, then suddenly I went deaf because of the sound of the gunshots as I watched my husband and sons killed before my own eyes. My daughter and I were taken but got separated when we were thrown into different trucks. I have not heard of her till today. All I think about is that my husband and sons died with an empty stomach" (Hadiza, Bakassi Camp, August 2020).

Fatima said:

"After dinner, suddenly, we heard gunshots, and we heard people screaming and chanting, Allah Akbar!! We sprang out of the house and we saw men with masked faces seizing young girls. My mother tried to hide me but she could not, they snatched me from her hand and took me away…" (International Alert 2019,1:40 -1:50 mins)

Another woman shared her story thus:

"We were living in harmony when some men wearing military uniform impersonating the military entered our village and started shooting, killing people, young and old even infants. Boko Haram captured us and took us to their hideout in the mountains. We were taken to Sambisa forest where we lived for 3 years. They forced us into marriage, it did not matter whether you were married or unmarried, no one was spared. I was forced into marriage and in that imposed marriage, I gave birth to three children" (International Alert 2019, 2:48 - 2:59 mins.)

Besides their unpreparedness for the violence that ensued and the sudden change to their lives, these women have had to deal with challenges they were not prepared for; take on roles they did not plan for like the sudden loss of family, family heads, saddling them with responsibilities of becoming heads of household; loss of livelihoods; becoming sex slaves and forced wives and subjection to stigmatization within the IDP camps by being tagged "Boko Haram wives, bad blood"; caring for children left behind; mental instability amongst others (International Alert 2019).

The above experiences of how these women's lives were before the attack underpins certain factors that made their situation and unpreparedness more difficult. Their stories reveal the disadvantageous stereotypes associated with women as care givers and as the property of men within Nigerian society. This influenced their experiences of the violent conflict. Whilst most of the men were killed, the women were abducted for purposes attributed to their traditional roles as caregivers and their bodies targeted as weapons of warfare. This aspect of violent conflict has been captured by a large body of literature that records women's experiences as sex slaves, suicide bombers, their recruitment for reproduction, forced labour and so on (Agbaje 2020, Zenn & Pearson 2014).

Women are seen as dependents on men who need to be provided for, protected, and used by men and are deemed not capable of rational thinking (Abioye 2019, Abara 2012). Findings from the FGDs conducted revealed that most of the women had no paid employment as they were mostly housewives expected to remain home and care for their children. All agreed that their husbands, fathers, uncles or even their sons for those widowed provided for the family before the attack by the insurgents (FGDs Bakassi camp, CAN, Teachers Village, August 2020). Also studies document that over 80%

of women in the northeast are illiterates due to lack of relevance attributed to female education within the Nigerian society, more so in the northeast (Abioye 2019: 1, British Council Report 2014).

Such an incapacitated position makes women vulnerable in conflict situations like where they now must fend for themselves, their children and become head of households making decisions on how to tackle family needs and issues. Such difficult conditions can also lead to negative coping mechanisms like resorting to survival/transactional sex and forced marriage as a means of survival (UN News 2016).

For instance, during one of the interviews, Mary an 18-year-old in Teachers Village camp shared thus,

"before the attack, it was just me and my father, I lost my mother a long time ago. My father took care of my needs and I was preparing to get married. I did not have any work. Women are not supposed to work but take care of the home. My father was killed by Boko Haram when he tried to escape, I was taken by them, I suffered so much because I refused to marry anyone the commandant showed me. I was locked in a room and starved continuously for one week. My body could no longer bear it so I accepted to marry one of the men. Everything he did to me; I saw it as the price I had to pay to survive. It was painful at first but with time, I accepted my fate, I had no one at home anymore" (Mary Bakassi Camp, August 2020).

The sudden exposure to a life outside the protection of her father met her unprepared to tackle the challenges of the violent conflict. Also, the sexual objectification of these women by the BH insurgents further worsened their condition and resonates with what Scott terms as gender being a creation of "cultural construct… a social category imposed on sexed body" (Scott 1986:1056). How the Nigerian society has objectified women's body have subjected them to being tools for exploitation (Agbaje 2020:6). Sexual violence against women is seen as a tactics to not only subdue women but to establish men's dominance and authority over them (Zenn & Pearson 2014: 51). Adiza, a 23 year-old in Bakaasi camp, shared her experience thus: *"…all they did was rape me every night till I got pregnant as they said, this was my duty…I cannot even tell who the father of the child is… I felt worthless and like dying until I was rescued…" (Adiza Bakaasi camp, August 2020).*

In this way, the BH violent conflict not only inflicted physical harm but also emotional, and psychological trauma on the women caught up in the fighting. The positionings of these women before the conflict also had somewhat made them internalize these framings and labelling's that subject them to the authority of men. This is what Galtung refers to as cultural violence where power is exercised in such a way that it is legitimized by the structure and internalized (Galtung 1990:292). As such, their unpreparedness from the BH attack was focused more on the change to assumption of roles and exposure to positions supposedly meant for men, roles they had not embodied before.

How then have women coped with these changing dynamics?

5.3 "All these suffering is not new to me" – A Life History

One of the focal points of this research was to analyse how women's past experiences or life history influenced their ways of coping. The story of Amira 55 stood out during the KII and was chosen as the case study for this analysis. This study looked at her life course from childhood to adulthood. The table below tells her story:

> *"Growing up in a family of 22 leaves you with not much choice especially as a female child. Coming from a polygamous home and being the eldest female child meant I had to do everything in the house. There was never enough to provide for us all, so we had to do more to take care of our needs. I learnt how to sew, cook, clean, wash and take care of the chores at home as early as age 5. Schooling was never an option for me or us the females, in fact, my father was scorned in the community for having too many female children instead of boys, as such he wasted no time in giving us out in marriage at an early age. At age 13 I was already married to Kassim. That union led to the 5 children I had for him, 4 boys and 1 girl, then I lost my husband to a motor accident in 2012. Since then I have been alone and struggled to raise all 5 children by*

> *myself. I became a trader selling foodstuff and planting on my husband's farm to take care of the family. When Boko Haram attacked, I lost my business, my shop got burnt and now I must start all over. Everything I learnt all my life has helped me and my children survive so far. I am a businesswoman, I knit and sew clothes with just using thread and needle, I cook, sell for the camp women, officials and outsiders, I also clean dead bodies in the mortuary too so they pay me. I will be leaving the camp soon to start my life with my children and go back to planting and farming. All I know is, I must survive, and be strong for my children, nothing more, all these sufferings are not new to me" (Amira, CAN camp, August 2020).*

This story reflects what Hart describes as coping being entrenched in the 'spirit, mind, and body' (Hart 2017: 1). This is to say coping does not exist in a vacuum but revolves around an individual's life and experiences over time. It starts with behaviours and attitudes that cultural and structural practices have influenced us to embody which thereto shapes the ways we respond (Galtung 1971). This woman has had to build resilience over life hardships overtime judging from her childhood to adulthood experiences. Therefore, encountering the difficulties set by the BH violence reinforced her resilience to push through yet another struggle. This also relates to Chowdhury and Folkman's idea that overcoming stressful encounters is motivated by hope and the need to address or fix the problem. (Folkman 2010, Chowdhury 2019).

5.4 Psychological/Social and Spiritual Coping with Trauma

Individuals respond to traumatic or stressful encounters in certain ways: 'cognition, emotional, depression, social withdrawal or outright denial' etc (NCBI 2014, Folkman, Lazarus et al. 1986). It is their reaction that determines the impact on their psychological well-being and ways they resort to coping (Folkman 2010). During the FGDs with the women, when asked, how their experience of the violence affected them, most expressed in similar terms; "I Don't Have Time to Think" (FGDS, August 2020). Further probing to understand this response showed that for the women, they expressed that when violence occurs, it leaves one with no time to think or plan. "You just do what you have to do to survive at the moment" (Mina 42, Bakassi Camp, August 2020). Aisha, 30 years old in FGD 1 said:

"The tears may come later but when it's happening, you just have to keep moving. When I lost my husband and 2 sons, there was no time to mourn, I had to escape with my daughter, it was until I got to CAN camp, that is when it all set in and the tears refused to stop but what can I do…I just keep living" (Survivor Bakassi Camp, August 2020).

This response best suits what Folkman says about emotion-focused or problem-focused reaction after an encounter. The reaction is either focused emotionally on the stress factor or on addressing challenges caused by the encounter. It is the aftermath of the conflict that impacts on the mental well-being. This is where the different levels of coping as espoused by Chowdhury come into play; taking control of the situation, facing the challenges, seeking support, some live in denial, some accept their current reality and seek for possible means of survival, some close up on their emotions (Chowdhury 2019).

In this instance, this study sought to understand if the women's reaction to their experience of the Boko Haram violence had any significant influence from their past experiences of violence from religious, cultural norms and practices in the northeast known to promote male dominance and women subjugation, therefore making women internalize their subjectiveness to violent abuse and other forms of discrimination (Teefah, - Voices of Youth 2019, Laouan, F - CARE Nigeria 2018). Studies show that over 42% of women in Kano State alone experienced intimate partner violence that impacted their health and mental well-being, 6 in every 10 women in the northeast of Nigeria had experienced gender-based violence before the age of 15 (Tanimu, Yohanna et al. 2016, Teefah, - Voices of Youth 2019).

Findings from the FGDs conducted corroborates the above report as these women affected by the Boko Haram violence affirmed that they had experienced prior acts of violence in their homes or

their lives before as men beating their wives or women being punished is permissible by religion and culture (FGDs, August 2020, Zenn & Pearson 2014). As such their reactions were more problem-focused than emotional based. They did not dwell so much on how the violence had impacted on their mental wellbeing as they accept these practices as a norm. They focused more on finding ways to survive the impact of the violence on their livelihoods and access to basic needs.

This in turn raised the question about the future implication of not dealing directly with the impact of these violent attacks or untreated chronic trauma on their psychological wellbeing. Studies show that the denial and or dissociation of trauma may lead to huge psychological as well as physical disorders to quality of life of an individual if not dealt with at an early stage and may transcend to costly future consequences like the high cost in healthcare, unemployment, intergenerational trauma, anger, amongst many other impacts ((SAMHSA 2014). Violence permeates not only the 'physical body' but the 'mind and spirit' which becomes structural and evasive to being perceived as wrong, in-built repression of marginalized acts (Galtung 1990:294).

To understand better how these women coped psychologically, a study on their reactions according to the age brackets was considered, findings revealed that age played a key role to how women responded to their experience of the violence and the ways in which they coped. Respondents within the age range of 18-30 years expressed similarly that they were traumatized by their experience as many witnessed the death of their loved ones, they said they thought about their experiences mostly at night, as they find it difficult to sleep because of the agonizing nightmares and the memory of how their loved ones died (FGDs August 2020).

Raya, a 22-year-old survivor vividly stated: *"I want the noise to stop, it's too much, this is all I hear"* she says *(Raya, Teachers village camp, August 2020).* After watching her father slaughtered before her eyes, her mother burnt inside their house while she screamed. To cope with this trauma, she said, *"I sing to drown out the noise, I spoke to one of the kind aid workers, she bought me a headset and music box, it helps me sleep at night"* (Raya, Teachers village camp, August 2020).

This also corroborates the experiences shared by some survivors with humanitarian agencies of their horror stories of repeated rape when abducted by the terrorist sect, followed by the stigmatization faced at the IDP camp from others who see them as tainted and worthless (International Alert 2019, HPN Report 2017). Kamsi, a 20-year-old whose story relates to this experience shared how she coped thus,

"I found a friend, she took me to her mother, who helped me through the pain, she spoke words of comfort and encouragement to me. she told me it was not my fault, then gradually I started forgetting and learned to smile. With my friend, I am the best human" (Kamsi CAN camp, Survivor, August 2020).

Within the age group of 31-50, they all seemed to be in denial of how the conflict had impacted on their mental state. Most of the response on not thinking came from this age category. Findings revealed that this sect of women is the ones saddled with most responsibilities, many were head of households, they have tons of children to carter for or aged relatives. Thus, their burden of responsibilities helps them push their emotions aside and helps them to forget or at least not to think about their experiences (FGDs, August 2020). Hamayaji said that in order to protect her children, she feigned madness and put her daughter in a ditch for 9 months so she would not be taken by the insurgents (NPR 2017b).

Aisha 32 years said: *"I don't worry about what happened, Allah does not like the mention of evil, Allah hears and knows, I pray when I am sad"* (Aisha Teachers Village, August 2020, Quran 2016)). For this woman, hiding under the principles of the Quran and not talking about her experience seen as evil helps her cope.

For the age group, 51 and above, Most of their responses revolved around forming social circles, having faith and prayers. They are assumed to be the most vulnerable as they are more advanced in age and most dependent on their children or relatives to care for them. Hajiyah 52 said: *"Time teaches you a lot of things, I Talk and Cry to my God, I fear for the younger generation"* (Hajiyah, Gwoza community, August 2020). Findings reveal that this age category mostly forms a common support network where they give each other support through prayers, singing and making handcrafts together (The Guardian 2020). Hajiyah further said*: "this is all I look forward to when I wake up, it makes me happy"* (Hajiyah Gwoza community, August 2020). Magida, 50, in FGD 3 said she recites her favourite verse from the bible every day to give her hope and strength. She said: *"yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me…"* (Psalm 23:4 KJV, Maigida, FGD 3, August 2020).

This resonates with what studies term as 'emotional dysregulation' were persons in dealing with trauma resort to others or objects to help regulate their emotions (SAMHSA 2014: 3). These examples

show the efficacy of belief and the ideals of religion in the way it has become a dependent factor in people's lives, both consciously and unconsciously. The violations being against their bodies, mind and soul made them look for a deeper source, more internalized to help them cope with their experiences (Galtung 1990). Social groups, religion, faith has been portrayed as an ideal way to repress pain, using interaction with others, prayers, songs, and hope as a strategy to deal with their psychological and emotional well-being.

In another light, these experiences also resonate with Marie Dugan's concept of "Nested conflicts" (Dugan 1996). Conflict is never linear, it may have started out in a specific way but manifest and becomes interwoven with other relational issues, structural or sub-systems creating more complex problems (Dugan 1996:15). The BH conflict started out as war waged on the Nigerian government for an Islamic state but however transcended to using women as weapons of warfare due to structural inequalities that have cast women as properties of men, this, in turn, affects psychologically and socially the ways women have internalized violence within this structure and their ways of coping.

Figure 3: Nested theory of Conflict
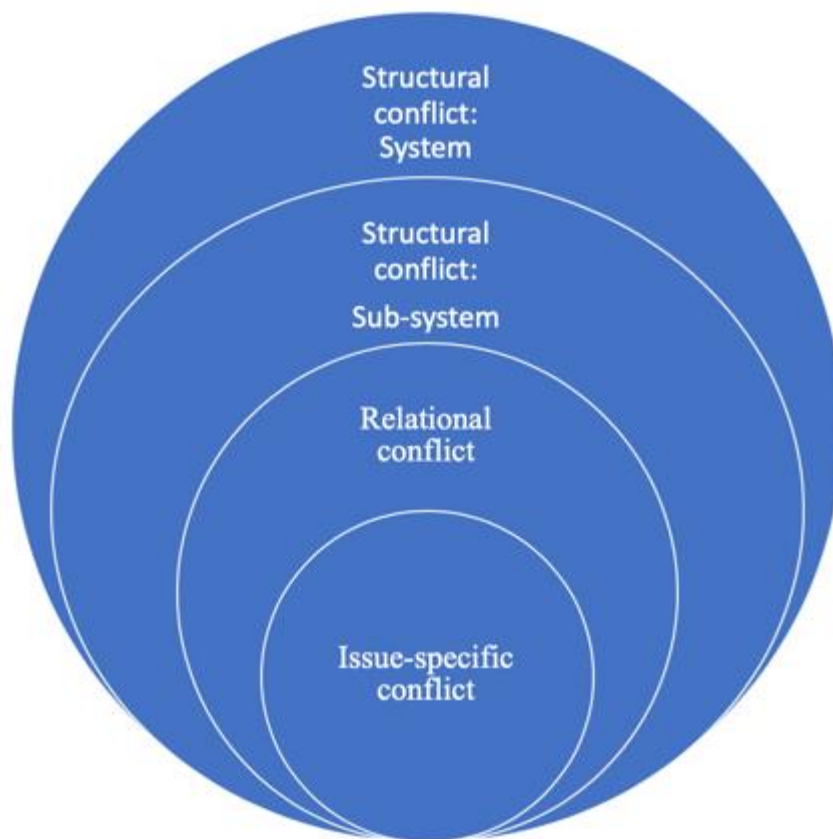
Source: Kenneth MD in (Dugan, 1996 "A Nested Theory of Conflict"). https://www.kennethmd.com/a-nested-theory-of-conflict-maire-dugan/

Many of the women as shown in the examples above close up on their emotions regarding the mental impact of their violent experiences but rather use their traditional and cultural roles as wives, mothers, care-givers as a shield and a means of survival. Those without these responsibilities resort to other shields like the resort to social groups, religion, spirituality, friends to make them feel better. It shows the deepening roots of culture not just being a practice but a norm that has become a lifestyle for these women which has now shaped their ways of response within the conflict. This what Galtung refers to as the ABC

triangle on the influence of behaviours, attitudes and actions shaped by cultural or structural practices all driven by basic human needs (Galtung 1990).

5.5 Material coping: "Use what you have to get what you need"

Studies show that one of the major impacts of traumatic events on psychological well-being is the change in the world view in what Janoff termed "shattered assumptions". In his words, "during a traumatic event, the worldview of individuals change, the world is no more perceived as benevolent or kind nor do they perceive themselves as competent and secured" (Amusan, Ejoke 2017:1)According to UNOCHA, many of the IDP camps in the northeast are without security, so 223,000 people in camps are without security (HRW:58). These women channel their fear and insecurities to focusing on meeting their material needs or daily survival as their coping strategy. As Ukajia 35 from the FGD 2 said:

"…all I worry about is what my children will eat the next day and their safety, how we can survive today. I wake up every day fearing for their lives. We all go out to hustle, nothing else matters" (Ukajia Bakassi camp, August 2020).
A female household head in Borno IDP camp said this:
"Here in the camp, the person in charge of aid is the chairman. He controls who gets what whenever aid comes. For somebody like me, I have never gotten any aid when it comes to livelihood support. I only have one room to stay in, but I have not received livelihood support. Even when I complain, they do away with my complaint, because I do not have any male figure in my life to help me fight for it. Women who have husbands get more aid than single women." (UN women Nigeria, CARE Nigeria, OXFAM 2020:13).
These kinds of experiences have led many of the women improvising other means of survival to meet their needs, which is what is often termed the 'hustle' in this context. Many from the FGDs indicated they resort to begging as a means of survival. One of the respondents stated thus: *"the majority of us mothers take care of the family, we go out for begging because our men are too proud to beg, therefore we go on their behalf" (Amina 33, teachers Village camp, August 2020).* Another respondent said:
"I collect clothes on credits, I then sell it to people inside the camp then I take the profit back to the business owner in the market where the profit is being shared by so doing it indicates transparency and creates more opportunities for a business deal" (Atikah 25, Bakassi Camp, August 2020).
Also gathered from the FGDs was the reliance on beneficial relationships with camp officials especially those with access to distribution chains so they can be considered first when the supplies come (Amnesty International 2018). Many of the women especially the age category 18- 30 years have had to resort to survival sex so they can feed themselves and their families (Amnesty International 2018). Faidah 22 years old, stated thus:
"the officials are very wicked when it comes to food or aid distribution. When I came to the camp, I would go months without being given anything except my fellow campmates or scraps from the remains because I never got to hear when the supplies came or meet the criteria. My friend told me if I continue like this, I will die of hunger and she told me what she did to be receiving supplies every time and I decided to join her. I had to agree to a relationship with one of the camp officials so I can survive" (Faidah, Bakassi Camp, August 2020).
Findings revealed that the composition of the camp officials is made up of a cluster of groups partnering together ranging from the government to international and local humanitarian actors. However, NEMA is in charge of supplies and distribution to the different IDP camps whilst the State agencies manage these distributions under what is termed 'memorandum of understanding' (HRW 2016).
The resort to survival based on relationship or sex with the camp officials traces back to what pieces of literature and studies capture as sexual objectification of women in this region (Agbaje 2020, Amnesty International 2018). In a society where women are incapacitated and disadvantaged economically even within formal sectors, such limitations offer these women lesser options of survival during the crisis. Only 20 per cent of enterprises are owned by women within the corporate sector and women constitute only 11.7 per cent of Board Directors in the country (Ogankpa 2016). Land rights and property ownership for women remains a struggle as even the supreme court only declared on this right in 2014 in the notorious case of Ukeje vs. Ukeje, that women are entitled to property rights or land inheritance (Goitom 2014). Despite this legal declaration, land inheritance practically remains patrilineal passed from fathers to sons or male descendants excluding women. In the northeast, only 4 per cent of land is owned by women (Campbell 2019, Ogankpa 2016). This resonates also with the

culture of silence grounded in the upbringing of women in the northeast, where sexual abuse of women is often silenced for fear of stigmatization by others and or reprisal (GBV Sub Sector Working Group – Nigeria, 2017). Sexual abuse of women even spousal rape remains largely unpunished and justified as the right of men (Abioye 2019). During the FGD, findings revealed that most of the women shared common views that they held back on sharing their sexual abuse stories because they did not want to be seen as bad and tainted (FGD, Bakassi, CAN, Teachers Village, August 2020).

Also contributing to this underlying factor is the exclusion of women in decision-making processes or formal sectors as already shown in the governance structure in Nigeria (chapter 3, p.16) and also typical to what Scott explains understanding gender as "…a way of signifying relations of power" (National Bureau of statistics 2019, Scott 1986:1067). Women are not included in the planning and set up of intervention committees. During an interview with a representative from the Centre for Peace and Security Studies, a body that advises the Nigerian Government on Conflict and security issues, said:

"When conflict occurs, a commission of enquiry is set up to carry out an assessment and come up with intervention programmes that will address the needs of those affected, sadly, there are no women represented in this commissions, how do you then expect men to know adequately the needs of women. The assumption is that violent conflicts do not specifically affect women. We discovered that intervention programmes do not consider how these conflicts affect women and therefore programmes usually exclude women-specific needs asides the general provision of food items etc…" (Representative, Centre for Peace and Security Studies, September 2020).

Due to the gap created in acknowledging women's specific needs

and voices in intervention schemes, many have been pushed into resorting to survival sex and even manipulative relationships by these officials as a means of coping (Amnesty International 2018:7).

Another instance is in the criteria set for qualification for aid in the camp. When asked how aids where distributed, all the aid workers gave a similar response of certain requirements the IDPs must meet to qualify to receive aid (International Alert 2019). One had this to say: *"whatever aid we have like food, cash, seeds etc is distributed to the most vulnerable in the camp" (Aid workers interview- REBHI, Peace Ambassadors Center for Humanitarian aid and Empowerment, August 2020).* The most vulnerable here was said to include people with disabilities, lactating mothers, children, elderly women, pregnant women, most traumatized etc (Aid workers interview, August 2020). The question is who defines vulnerability? Is displacement not sufficient?

Findings revealed that these women are compelled to tell their stories or experiences so they can be assessed if their experiences qualify them access to aid (Aid workers interview, August 2020). On the other hand, works of literature have portrayed these women as manipulative in their interactions with humanitarian actors in the way they share their stories portraying themselves as victims and needing help, however, findings from this research show that the criteria set by these organizations are the manipulating factor coercing these women into sharing horrific details to be deemed ideal or vulnerable enough to receive aid (International Alert 2019, Zemo, Amina, et al., 2019). Aisha, 34 said: *"if we say nothing, they think we don't need help, as if displacement from our homes is not enough, we have to tell them what they want to hear so we can get help" (Aisha- CAN Camp, August 2020).*

Also proven to be a source of coping for these women is the reliance on support from local actors who provide the platform to help women form networks and acquire skills to better themselves. Some of these initiatives started from women that were affected by the conflict, who came together to form networks to help each other having seen the neglect of the government and international actors in addressing their specific needs. From the FGDs, most women rely on support from these local organisations like BOWDI, targeted at providing livelihood assistance to women in what is known as community-based participatory planning (BOWDI 2020). The Rule of Law Empowerment Initiative also called PAWAN are focused on the struggle to include women in security and governance especially in these regions (PAWAN 2020).

These local actors are hardly known or mentioned in the media space due to the formality gap created between the INGOs and these local actors. In an interview with a representative from BOWDI- she said: *"they don't know us because we don't have all the formal structures, we are a*

small group just focused on helping these women in our own little way when the donors come, we share with them the pressing needs of these women but some already come with their agenda which sometimes does not speak to the specific needs of these women. And when we tell them, they say, it's a project that has been set up already. These women need help beyond food and clothing's" (interviewee, BOWDI August 2020).

This refers to the ideal these humanitarian actors represent and how and whose needs are addressed. It also raises questions as to what informs the interests of the humanitarian actors pertaining to the provision of aid. An angle worth expanding on in future research.

5.6 Family, Friends and Communal Support

Whilst many women find ways to cope on their own without much support, many still need the love and support of family, friends, and community to help them maintain some form of stability (Zemo, Amina et al., 2019). Findings revealed that many of the women coped through the support and connections formed within a social circle like women who came together to form a contribution group called 'Adashe' where they put resources together then each person takes the total sum on a rotational basis to help each other grow their businesses (Oduah, 2018, FGDs, August 2020). Through such groups, women formed friendships, partake in activities, share ideas, and interact with each other. These relationships and social circle became their strength and coping strategy with the ongoing BH violence. Ralia, 35 in the FGD 2 had this to say:
"Belonging to the Adashe group is everything to me not just because of the money we contribute to helping each other but because, it's where I feel safe, there is so much love and togetherness, at least here, I have people to laugh and share my worries with" (Ralia, CAN camp, August 2020).
Halima 40 in FGD 3 said:
"We keep our differences aside, we are not here to enjoy, it is a temporary condition which we learn to cope with, it's very difficult but we have no choice. A family of ten lives in our kitchen which you know is too uncomfortable" (Halima, CAN Camp, August 2020)
In another instance, women relayed during the interviews that communal support also help them cope with the BH violence. Celebrations held by the community whether religious or cultural is a representation of hope for them. They referred to the popular Sallah celebrations known as 'Eid Al-Fitr', a practice observed by Muslims worldwide as a way to end the holy month of fasting and prayer called 'Ramadan' (NPR 2017a, Olesin, Nmodu et al. 2015). Findings from the FGDs revealed that this is a time these women look forward to where they all must go back to their different communities to celebrate together as a family. When asked why this celebration was so important to them and why they had to go back to their communities that were not safe for this celebration, most responded similarly, thus: *"Sallah gives us hope of peace" (FGDs, August 2020). Azimi 45, a respondent from Gwoza community said, "Nowhere is better than home, we cannot celebrate Sallah in a strange land" (Azimi, Bakassi Camp, August 2020).*
Report has also shown that these communal celebrations have helped create a system of support for these women like the allocation of land by people in the community to assist the displaced people, lands for farming to sustain their livelihoods, some provided shelter during the celebration for people with no homes or family. For the women, this has helped broker peace across lines of ethnicity and religion (NPR 2017a). A representative at the Centre for peace and security stated thus: *"while men are separated along religious and ethnic lines, women mostly come together to show a kind of unprecedented example to men" (Interviewee, CPS, September 2020).*

5.7 The Exit Strategy: Leaving/Freedom

Living in the IDP camp as depicted in a plethora of cases presents untold hardship due to the limited resources, abuse, insecurity, and insufficient aid available especially for women (OCHA 2019, Amnesty International 2018). This has led to many women opting to leave the acclaimed protection of the camps to seek for better opportunities (UN Women 2019, Oduah, C. 2018). On the other hand, the hardship faced within the camp has led to some opting to go back to their captors because according to them life was far better than what is offered in the displacement camps (Nwaubani 2018). Findings showed that many women left and or desire to leave the IDP camps to start their lives on their independent of the support from humanitarian actors and also many indicated that the host

communities offered more help and they had freedom (Erong 2017). The resort of choosing life outside the camp were driven either towards a negative or positive outcome.

Desire to Leave:

Drawing from recorded accounts of women whose experiences of the BH conflict built their resilience to creating their means of livelihood depending on their talents or knowledge learnt from trainings by the humanitarian agencies. Several women have now been able to set up their businesses and create even more opportunities for other women affected by the conflict (UN Women 2019).

Young *Rukayat, 20 harnessed her domestic chore skills as a means of survival. She said she is known as the 'wash lady' and 'akara seller' in the camp and outside as she sells and does the laundry for most of the officials and also people outside the camp to survive, a skill she said was her obligation as the only female child in her family before the conflict. From the funds gathered, she intends to set up her laundry shop and leave the camp (Rukayat, CAN camp, August 2020).*

Amaria, 25 in FGD 3 had this to say: *"leaving is the best option because I need to find a better opportunity for my family and I, my children need to go back to school, life here is just unbearable. I had a successful business before Boko Haram, I had a farm and life was comfortable now I have nothing. I learnt how to sew here, I just need to buy a sewing machine and funds, then I will leave with my children to start my life all over"* (Amaria, Teachers Village, August 2020).

Going back to their captors/freedom:

On the other hand, findings showed that many of the women upon being captured by Boko Haram though they started out as slaves or being maltreated had gradually adapted to the lives by their captors and many had even risen in rank as wives of the terrorist leaders which made them treated specially (Nwaubani 2018). Some even stated they had more freedom and respect within the terrorist sect than in the camps, and hence their desire to return to BH (Nwaubani 2018). In her words "People often don't realize how much choice Boko Haram gave women…many were extended freedoms they'd never experienced before" (Nwaubani 2018:1).

The recorded account of Aisha Yerima captured at 21 by BH in 2013 vividly captures this narrative, as she recounts the special treatment she received in the hand of her captors and the authority she wielded as the wife of one of the BH leaders before she was rescued by the military. Life in the IDP camp presented the opposite conditions to Aisha which subsequently led to her escape and return to her captors. To her, life with them was much better (Nwabuani 2018).

The above narrative speaks of a 'wicked problem' where these women are put in a position to choose the lesser of two evils, it is messy and complicated wrapped up in a 'dynamic social context' such that they can't even decipher the root cause or the solution thereof (Rittel & Webber 1973, Ritchey 2013 : 1).

Depending on their diverse needs and how their experiences shaped their way of seeing life, these women in an attempt to forge a better life for themselves opt to go back to the lives they feel offered the most advantage for them.

This again speaks to the teaming efforts of structural inequalities and framings of gender within the Nigerian society, such that even in conflict, these unequal power relations remain salient and are replicated in how women respond and cope. This is what Galtung refers to structural violence which is invisible and has been normalized (Galtung 1971, Scott 1986).

In FGD 2, most of the women within the age bracket of 18-30 who have lost or been separated from their spouse, family or had no children before the conflict saw this as an opportunity to live their dreams, many attuned towards getting an education and setting up businesses for themselves, an opportunity they say they would not get if they were still married or lived with their families (FGDs, August 2020). Like 19-year-old Zara says: *"this is the best opportunity given to me. I am free from the shackles of marriage, I want to go to school and live my best life"* (Zara, Teachers Village Camp, August 2020).

5.8 Conclusion

From the above, women affected by the BH violence/conflict have built resilience and found diverse ways of coping through the different challenges posed by this conflict. The power

imbalances within the Nigerian society have placed women systematically in positions of coping because they simply do not have any other alternatives within an institutionalized structure of violence and marginalization.

Chapter 6 Conclusions

6.1 Main Finding: Failure to Protect

This research paper shows the impact of the BH violent conflict on women in the northeast region of Nigeria more specifically women in IDP camps, Borno State. The manifestation of these impacts is operationalized through an already institutionalized structure that enforces male dominance over women and the failure of the State to address these inequalities (HRW 2014:38).

Drawing from the women's experiences, this study brought to fore the widening gap in the responsiveness and accountability of duty bearers in protecting women and or implementing laws to curb acts of violence or marginalization against women which exacerbates during violent conflict.

This lacuna has made women adopt more self-reliant ways of coping within these institutionalized discriminatory practices and their unequal structural positionings in the society especially in the context of the BH violent conflict. Against the popular notion that the sole dependence of these women is mostly on humanitarian aid, this study proved to the contrary that these women rely on other diverse ways to survive including; dependence on skills and talents shaped by ascribed traditional roles to tackle their economic needs; building social networks and connections to tackle psychological and social needs and resort to confronting their day to day struggles with resilience built from their historical past of experiencing hardships within a patriarchal society.

This, in turn, questions the role humanitarian actors play in their interactions and influence to provide aid and assistance in ways that contribute to women's marginalization; by setting standards that tend to coerce and manipulate women into sharing sordid details to enable them to qualify for aid; also the kind aid of provided which mostly keep women within their ascribed gendered roles. The lack of proper supervision, checks and balances of the distribution process and chains of command contributes to the continued vulnerability of women, their abuse and exploitation. The popular saying "who watches the watchdog " best describes the state of this process.

Coping for these women is more of a life course than just something that emanated from the BH violence. This study unearthed the dynamics ways the BH conflict changed women's structural positionings from wives, mothers, caregivers to embracing new identities beyond their earlier structural positionings. Despite these changing roles, the dynamic ways in which these women have confronted these challenges navigated relationships and bridged the gap in gender roles makes their accounts and voices relevant in development processes.

Also, their coping in relation to their psychological and emotional wellbeing mostly influenced according to their age categories as shown in the findings makes it pertinent to ask; if being older makes it easier to manage the effect of the violent conflict as against being younger? A thought for future research.

The overarching goal of this study was to understand women's coping strategies during violent conflict using the BH conflict as a case point. Using a composite systematic approach helped this study incorporate diverse data sources to satisfy the objective of this research and answer the questions set herein despite the sensitivity and complexity of the subject of research.

Investigating these women's coping strategies through the different analytical context as shown in this study has helped build a more holistic notion to women's account during

violent conflict. It is also worth researching in future how these coping strategies interact and are impacted by the current Covid-19 pandemic.

6.2 Going Forward:

The multi-dimensional ways of coping adopted by these women provide a more intersectional outlook of women which goes beyond the stereotypical roles and identities of victimhood and or perpetrators. These narratives, therefore, should be expanded into policies and intervention schemes to give a better grounding for more sustainable conflict transformation measures like the National policy on IDPs in Nigeria 2012 (NPIDP 2012). Recognizing these women's voices, ideas, vision, and skills and channelling them towards addressing specific needs and not assumed needs would create a more effective impact in helping address comprehensively issues arising from this conflict and an all-inclusive transformative measure.

The ideals of displacement and whose interest it represents should be questioned. Aid should be targeted at transforming lives capable of taking victims of the violent conflict out of displacement into resettlement and reintegration into the society rather than keep them in an unending cycle of displacement. This speaks to the order of priority given to victims of violent conflict by the Nigerian government along with all collaborating partners. The needs of those affected by these violent conflict should be prioritized first rather than prioritize restitution of the insurgents.

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Appendices:

1.1 Map Showing Areas Affected By Boko Haram In Nigeria:

(Encyclopaedia Britannica 2017)

1.2: Estimate of women and girls living in IDP as a result of Violent Conflict at the end of 2018, Country, and age group.

TABLE 2: Estimates of the number of women and girls living in internal displacement as a result of conflict and violence at the end of 2018, by country and age group, using national age distribution data

Country	0-4	5-14	15-24	25-59	60+	All women and girls
Afghanistan	187,000	350,000	276,000	393,000	56,000	1,264,000
Azerbaijan	15,000	27,000	25,000	103,000	24,000	196,000
Bangladesh	18,000	38,000	39,000	98,000	16,000	210,000
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2,000	5,000	5,000	24,000	13,000	50,000
Burkina Faso	3,000	6,000	4,000	7,000	1,000	23,000
Burundi	4,000	6,000	4,000	7,000	1,000	24,000
Cameroon	51,000	88,000	65,000	112,000	15,000	334,000
Central African Republic	49,000	91,000	70,000	96,000	16,000	323,000
Chad	8,000	12,000	9,000	12,000	1,000	45,000
Colombia	208,000	428,000	489,000	1,400,000	405,000	2,932,000
Congo	7,000	14,000	10,000	18,000	2,000	53,000

Côte d'Ivoire	23,000	39,000	31,000	49,000	6,000	149,000
Cyprus	6,000	12,000	15,000	56,000	23,000	114,000
Democratic Republic of the Congo	272,000	430,000	293,000	470,000	77,000	1,543,000
Egypt	6,000	9,000	7,000	19,000	4,000	47,000
Ethiopia	155,000	269,000	228,000	352,000	60,000	1,067,000
Georgia	9,000	18,000	15,000	71,000	37,000	153,000
Ghana	-	-	-	-	-	2,000
Guatemala	13,000	26,000	25,000	48,000	9,000	122,000
Honduras	9,000	19,000	19,000	39,000	7,000	95,000
India	19,000	41,000	40,000	104,000	24,000	230,000
Indonesia	-	1,000	1,000	3,000	-	7,000
Iraq	130,000	232,000	190,000	361,000	54,000	968,000
Kenya	10,000	20,000	16,000	29,000	3,000	81,000
Lebanon	-	-	-	2,000	-	5,000
Libya	10,000	20,000	17,000	53,000	7,000	109,000
Mali	10,000	17,000	11,000	17,000	2,000	59,000
Mexico	14,000	28,000	29,000	80,000	20,000	172,000
Mozambique	1,000	1,000	1,000	2,000		7,000
Myanmar	16,000	35,000	36,000	96,000	22,000	207,000
Niger	15,000	22,000	14,000	21,000	3,000	77,000
Nigeria	179,000	293,000	209,000	357,000	52,000	1,093,000
Pakistan	7,000	12,000	11,000	22,000	3,000	57,000
Palestine	16,000	28,000	23,000	42,000	6,000	117,000
Papua New Guinea	-	1,000	1,000	2,000	-	5,000
Peru	2,000	4,000	4,000	13,000	3,000	29,000
Philippines	14,000	30,000	27,000	63,000	14,000	149,000

Senegal	1,000	2,000	1,000	3,000	-	9,000
Somalia	233,000	376,000	277,000	378,000	61,000	1,327,000
South Sudan	141,000	242,000	187,000	310,000	51,000	933,000
Sri Lanka	1,000	2,000	2,000	8,000	3,000	19,000
Sudan	148,000	261,000	208,000	356,000	61,000	1,036,000
Syria	320,000	610,000	552,000	1,329,000	238,000	3,052,000
Thailand	1,000	2,000	2,000	10,000	4,000	21,000
Turkey	42,000	87,000	87,000	259,000	79,000	555,000
Uganda	2,000	4,000	3,000	4,000	-	16,000
Ukraine	19,000	42,000	37,000	210,000	120,000	429,000
Yemen	159,000	286,000	237,000	411,000	57,000	1,153,000

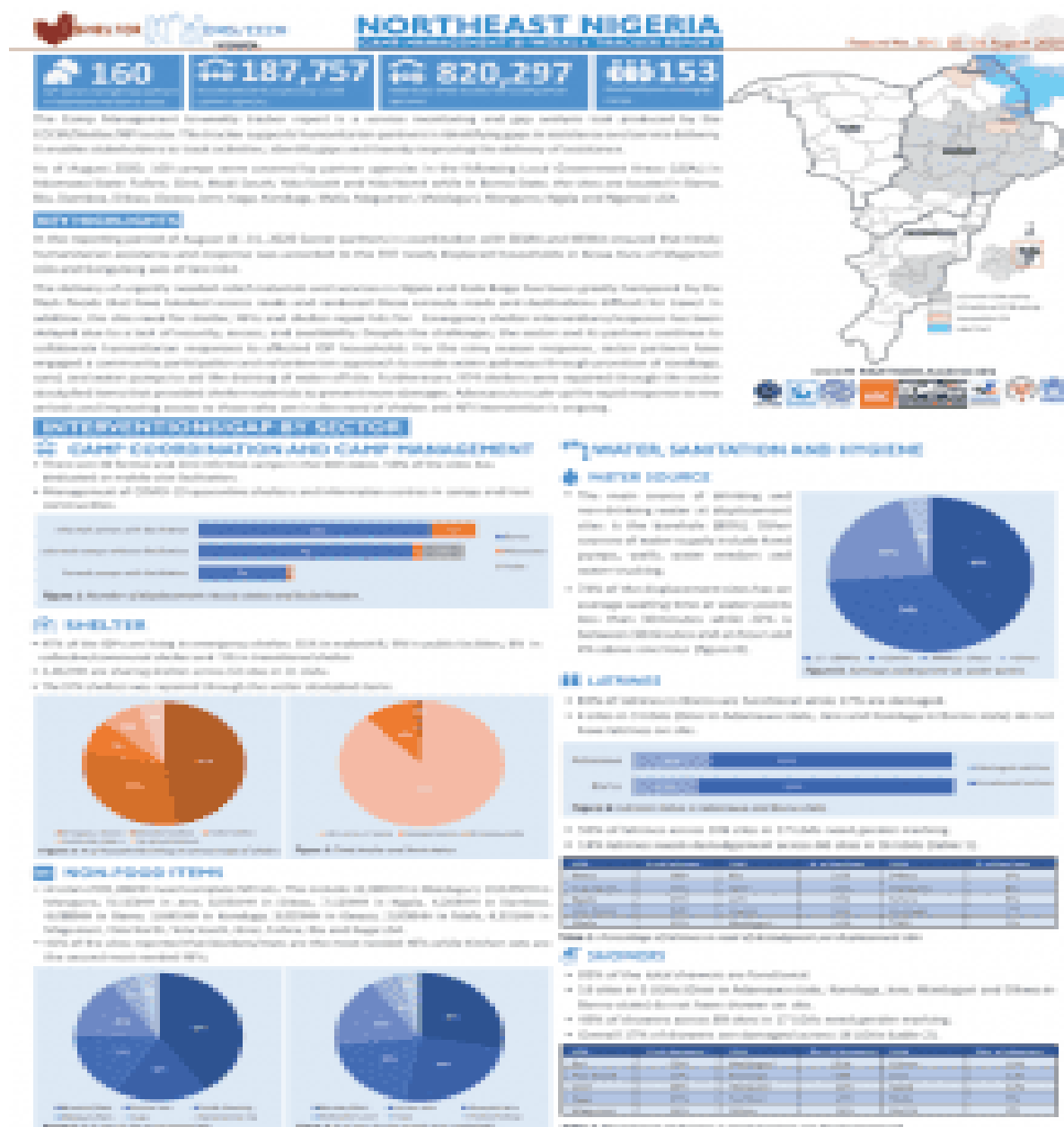** Some totals may not correspond with the sum of the separate figures because they have been rounded*

Source: IDMC(2018): https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/202003-twice-invisible-internally-displaced-women.pdf

1.3: IDP and Returnee Population Trend, Nigeria.

IDP and Returnee population trend

Source:DTMreport(2020): https://displacement.iom.int/system/tdf/reports/DTM%20Report%20Round%2032.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=9172

1.4 Graphic Representation Of The Stark Realities Of The Bay(Borno, Adamawa, Yobe) Camps:
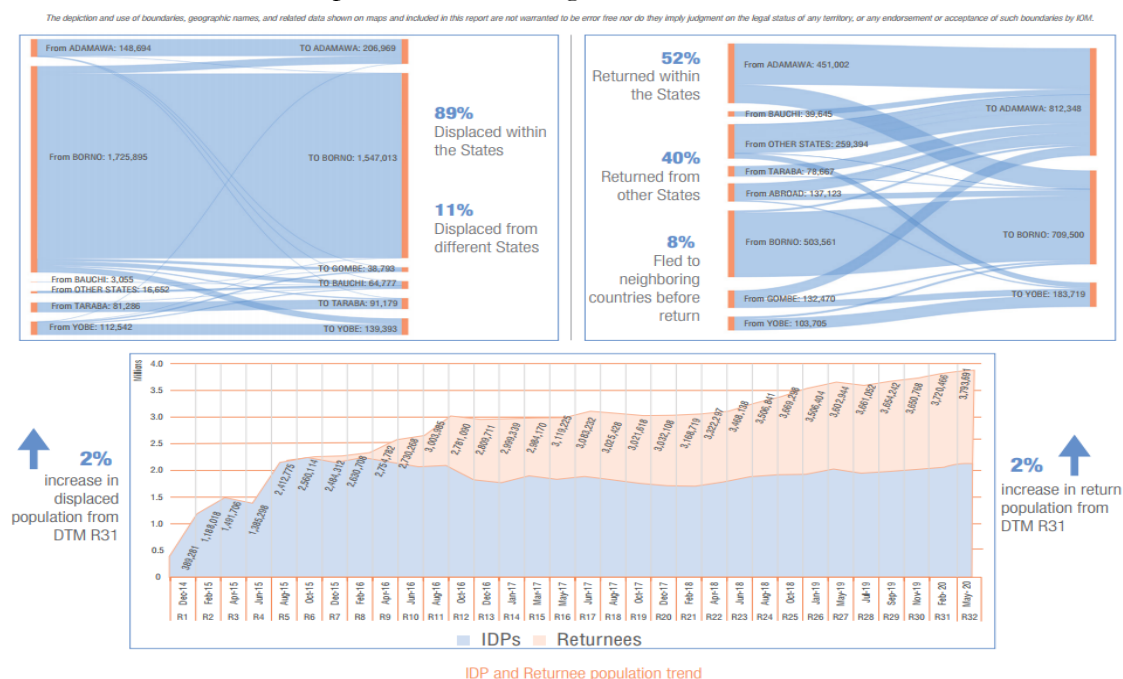
Source:(DMS/CCCM   2020)
https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/nga_multi_sector_site_tra cker_31_aug_2020_report.pdf

1.5 Request for Consent Letter to participants:

REQUEST FOR CONSENT

Salaam-Alaikaum (peace be unto you),

My name is Evelyn Anietie James, a postgraduate student at the International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands majoring in Human rights, Gender and Conflict studies. I was born in Sabongari, Kano State, Nigeria in 1990. My family and I lived in Sabongari until the 1991 religious war when we relocated to Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria barely escaping with our lives. Like you, we lost everything during that war and started life from scratch.

This war left us with a scar that can't be forgotten till date especially for my dear mother who is still traumatized with the pains of trying to survive those horrible nights in the bush with her six children. I am sharing my story with you to let you know, I understand what it means to be displaced by a violent conflict and the struggles that come with it. I am currently writing my thesis on the topic: Coping strategies of women during violent conflict: A case study of the ongoing Boko Haram conflict in Nigeria.

Writing on this topic is relatable to the struggles of women during violent conflict, their survival and the lack of these accounts in historical reports and intervention schemes. As part of the research requirement, I am conducting a field research to understand the experiences of women affected by the Boko Haram conflict, and how they have survived with the ongoing violence. This is to account for women's voices and experiences during this conflict within the academia.

I hereby request your consent to an interview session and I hope that with your assistance I can bring to fore an understanding of the experiences of women and ways in which they cope with the ongoing violence. I will ensure anonymity of identity and protect the confidence reposed in me.

Please find attached a letter of Introduction from the Institution for your information.

Thank you for your kind consideration. "Na gode"(thank you).

Best regards,
Evelyn James

1.6: Sample of Questionnaire used for Research Participants:

Questions For In-Depth Interview
1. How old are you?
2. Where are you from?
3. Where did you live before the conflict?
4. What were you doing before the conflict?

5. Are you married or single?
6. Do you have children? How many?
7. Did you have a family? Like father, mother, siblings etc
8. How many and are you with your family now?
9. How did the conflict affect you?
10. How did you get to the IDP camp?
11. At the camp, do you have access to all the camp facilities like toilet, water, sanitary and hygiene kits?
12. Who provides them and how often does it come?
13. Do you have friends? Who?
14. Do your friends have anything to do?
15. Do you engage in any activities in the camp? Like fun activities, religious groups, ethnic activities?
16. Do you receive any kind of help? From whom
17. Where do you get food?
18. How many times in a day do you eat?
19. Before now how many times did you eat in a day?
20. What kind of food?
21. How do you sleep at night?
22. Do you miss your life and family before the conflict?
23. Who do you talk to when you are lonely or feel down?
24. Do you have anyone that visits you? Who?
25. Do you have anything to do in the camp? What?
26. How did you get the resources?
27. Are you allowed to leave the camp? How often and why?
28. Do aid agencies distribute aid in the camp? How is it distributed?
29. Do you have to do anything to qualify for any of these assistance? What?
30. Are you friends with any of the workers?
31. How long does it take for aid to come?
32. And if it does not come on time, how do you cope? What do you do?
33. If someone is treated badly or abused, Is it reported? Who do you report to?
34. What is done after the report?
35. What gives you encouragement daily?

Questions for Focus Group:
1. Do you feel safe staying at the camp?
2. How do the camp officials treat you?
3. Does everyone have access to aid? If no, why and who gets what first?
4. Does age or sex matter in the distribution of aid? What other general or individual characteristics matter?
5. What kind of aid do you get?
6. Do you have anything to do within the camp? What?
7. How did you get the resources?
8. Do you all sleep together irrespective of age, religion, tribe etc? If no, why?
9. What would you like to change about the camp if you had an opportunity?
10. How do you care for your families? Who takes care of the family?
11. Is the aid provided sufficient?

12. Asides the support from the aid agencies, is there any other thing that you do to support yourself? What?
13. If given the option of leaving or staying in the camp, what would be your choice and why?

LIFE HISTORY:
1. Tell me a bit about yourself before the conflict started?
2. Where did you grow up?
3. How many are you in your family and what's your position in the family?
4. Do you have a close relationship with your parents?
5. Who is the bread winner in your family?
6. Did you go to school?
7. Are your parents supportive of you getting an education?
8. How did you get to school?
9. What was your performance like in school?
10. What were your duties at home?
11. What kind of food did you eat before the conflict? Was it sufficient?
12. What sort of things or holidays did your family celebrate?
13. What sort of things were your parents strict about? How? Why?
14. If you did something wrong, what kind of discipline did you get?
15. Are you treated differently from your other siblings? How?
16. What activities did you engage in growing up?
17. Did you have friends?
18. What kind of activities did you do with your friends?
19. Are you married?
20. How did you meet your husband?
21. How does he treat you?
22. How do you feel about him?
23. How are things decided in the family? Does he seek your advice or consent?
24. Moving away from your family, how did you feel about that?
25. Did you keep in touch with your family? How? Why?
26. Who do you talk to when you have concerns or worry?
27. Do you belong to any religious sect? Which? What does it mean to you?
28. If the conflict did not happen, what would you be doing?
29. Have you ever experienced a difficult situation before asides this conflict? What?
30. When did this happen?
31. What did you do to survive that situation?
32. If you had the opportunity now, what would you like to do?
33. What gives you strength every day?