Women and Violence Crises in Kontagora Emirate, 2002-2023

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Abstract

Violence against women is generally regarded as belonging in the private sphere and is shielded from outside scrutiny; a culture of silence reinforces the stigma that attaches to the victims rather than the perpetrators of such crimes. Women in Kontagora Emirate of Niger State are battered by various safety issues ranging from domestic violence and physical abuse, pervading patriarchal norms, This study found out that some of the causes of violence that lead to insecurity of women and reduce the participation of women's in political matters, economics, and social cultural activities is because of the fear and evils associated with politics in north Central Nigeria, vis-à-vis Kontagora Emirate, coupled with this menace is the issue of unemployment, lack of proper education of majority of the youths, largely females, religious extremism, high rates of poverty and lack of synergy among the security agencies. The result of these tells more on women and girls and this make them distance themselves from political matters because of their vulnerability. The paper adopts a historical research method to collects, verify and synthesis evidence from the past to establish facts that defend or refute any hypothesis. Primary source and Secondary materials were assessed to make this work worthy,

Key words: Domestic Violence, feminists, Kontagora Emirate, Vulnerability,

Introduction

Any nation that ignores the importance of security is bound to face instabilities and threats to her corporate existence and the result of this is simply insecurity (U N O, 2012). It is clear that Kontagora Emirate of Niger State is faced with internal security challenges for over two decades, the human cost of armed conflicts particularly physical and domestic violence, gender discrimination, insurgency, loss of lives, properties and displacement of people from their ancestral homes, pervading patriarchal norms that support the inequalities, has led to emotional and psychological stress, coupled with endless sufferings, leading to insecurity against women (Abolurin, 2003).

 Conflict does not affect women and men in the same way or in the same proportions, women and men are affected differently; women in this case are the soft target as well as main victims of violence and insecurity because of their vulnerability (UNDP, 2003). In Kontagora Emirate of North Central Nigeria, women in are the main victims of armed and social-conflicts, based on barriers of births, as well as gender –specific inequalities. Women are victims, especially because they are thrown into crises while finding themselves in an inferior position and this exposed them to various forms of physical, psychology and emotional stress (Usman, 2019).

Women in Kontagora Emirate of Niger State are battered by various safety issues ranging from domestic violence and abuse, kidnapping, sexual harassment, gender discrimination, rape, health deterioration, environmental degradation, workplace challenges, threat to cultural values, family issues. Coupled with these is the poor representation of women in political matters (Raji, 2018). However, insecurity of women has become one of the most important concerns of the 21st century. Neglecting women in matters that concern them most such as safety, all forms of domestic violence, physical abuse and socio-political representation can never be in the interest of countries or communities; (UNHRC, 2002). This is the precarious picture of women in Kontagora Emirate of Niger State. The concomitant effect of these challenges has made women more vulnerable, and has reduced their worth and value in the community and society at large. In the United Nations World Youth Report, it was documented that women are unique individuals with rights and responsibilities similar to men, but specific circumstances have distinguished the lives of women from men, insecurity and fear of violence or harassment has been variously argued to limit the mobility of women and girls (UNWYR, 2016), as the case in Kontagora Emirate. The World Health Organization has also pointed out that the high levels of violence against women tend to occur in situations where gender relations are unequal, and women have limited civic, political and economic rights in the society (WHO, 2002).

Furthermore, in Kontagora emirate, women are the main victims of armed and social conflicts. They witness insecurity and criminality in various forms, ranging from human trafficking, rape, forceful marriage, drug abuse and sometimes used as suicide bombers. Evidence from those captured and later released through negotiations

or payment of ransom, testifies to how they were being used as sex objects everyday by their abductors, and while some end up in refugee camps and internally displaced persons' centres, some died in the process. If there is any way in which the violence against women and the security of women in Kontagora Emirate of Niger State affect women, it is in the aspects of the physical, emotional and psychological stress the surviving victims went through, and because of the mode of brutality employed by the perpetrators of this crime and violence on women. Some of the survivors received permanent disabilities such as mental disorder and these are bitter experiences that will practically remain with the victims throughout their lives (Northern Trumpet, 2018). It is against this backdrop that this paper is premise on, Women and Violence Crises in kontangora Emirate, 2002-2023

Land and Peoples of Kontagora Emirate, Niger State

Geographically, Kontagora is a major town on the south bank of the Kontagora River in north-west Niger state, Nigeria. It is the capital city of the Kontagora Emirate that consists of chiefdom of Wushishi, Sarkin-Bauchi and the chiefdom of Kagara, all administratively grouped into Mariga, Magama, and Rafi local government with population of 260,700 peoples and covers 1,826km^2. It is home of many prominent Nigerians. The Nupe, Gbagyi, Kamuku, Gungawa, Hun-saare, Hausa, Busa and Koro form the majority of numerous indigenous tribes of the Emirate: other like Yoruba's, Igbo and Other tribes also leave peacefully with the indigenes (http://e.mwikipedia;nigerstate, 2023).

The Emirate has witnessed insecurity and criminality in various forms against women for more than two decades, which targets girls and women, evidence from those captured and later released through negotiations or payments of ransom, testified to how they were being used as sex objects by their abductors. Unfortunately, all attempts to protect women race from all forms of abuse and sufferings are met with stumbling block. Despite efforts by government, private organisations, groups, individuals and religious bodies to alleviate the structural economic, social-conflict and political conditions that foster tension and strife against women, such efforts have yielded only modest and slow results (NBS, 2018).

Causes of Violence leading to Insecurity of Women in Kontagora Emirate, Niger State

Causes of violence and insecurity of women in northern Nigeria, vis-à-vis Kontagora Emirate include but not limited to unemployment, pervading patriarchal norms, domestic violence, lack of proper education of majority of the youth, largely females, religious extremism, high rates of poverty and lack of synergy among the security agencies. The result of these tells more on women and girls because of their vulnerability (Aminu, 2022).

Effect of Violence on Women in Kontagora Emirate, Niger State.

Implications on Education:

Women and girls constitute the great majority of people who do not attend school or who are illiterate in northern Nigeria. Yet, education and literacy are needed to gain economic and political power (WHO, 2004). However, the partriachy norms coupled with the terror activities of Boko Haram and other armed groups in North Central Nigeria have affected all aspects of life including the educational sector.

Usman (2019)), opined that the central ideology of the sect is the opposition of western education, this the terrorist kill and kidnap thousands of students and teachers in a bid to achieve their objective of getting ride of the present educational system. The overall impact of insecurity in north central Nigeria is that many children particularly girls have been forced out of school, thereby increasing illiteracy and their vulnerability to other crimes. Example of this is the attack by a female suicides bomber in Federal College of Education Kontagora on Wednesday 12th of November, 2014, who blew herself up at the school premises, killing a female student and rendering some facilities and structures damaged, and this affected the College in terms of admission (BBC News, 2014). More female students have been kidnapped on several occasions on their way to school, and huge amount of ransom have been collected from their poor parents and relatives, some parents were forced to sell their farm lands and other farm produce to meet up with demands of the terrorists. Some were even killed, since most of the routes have been the hide out of these terrorists. Also in Kagara area of Kontangora, gun men attack and kill school pupils and abducted 27 other children. The fear of loss of lives has made both parents and intending students to seek for admission elsewhere. This has shown a remarkable decline in the numbers of enrolment of students in the emirate, particularly female's students (JDPC, 2022).

Implications on the Political Consciousness of Women in Kontagora Emirate, Niger State.

The levels of female participation and representation in Nigerian politics are low, but very low in the case of Kontangora Emirate. A sexist and patronage-based political culture, combined with gendered economic and household inequalities, are seen to be the main barriers to women's participation in the emerate. The solution points to quotas, empowerment programmes and better electoral monitoring as possible solutions, but successive governments have been reluctant to implement binding measures. Following Nigeria's first democratic elections after military rule in 1999, the proportion of women in all levels of government have remained low at all levels of government in the emirate, despite Women activeness in the economy of the emirate (JDPC, 2015). The main reasons for the lack of women's representation are:

1. A lack of effective government action;
2. Lower levels of female employment and education;

3. Sexist attitudes, sometimes but not always deriving from religion or traditional practices;

4. A corrupt and patronage-based political system;

5. Violence at elections, including against women candidates.

Niger State governments have subscribed to international agreements and instituted national policies to improve women's representation, but have done little to implement concrete measures. Nigerian civil society organisations and international funders have promoted a number of capacity building and behavioral change programmes; although the overall levels of female representation in government have barely improved since 1999. Previous and ongoing efforts by civil society organisations and activists to improve the situation in Kontangora include: a. changing cultural norms through media campaigns and education;

b. Programmes to empower women through training or mentoring;

C. Monitoring the fairness and conduct of elections;

d. Advocating for affirmative action from the state (Northern Trumpet, 2020).

Implications on Psychology of Women and Children

The insecurity occurrences in Kontagora Emirate resulted in the displacement of inhabitants of villages and towns. Many people, majority of them were woman and girls were driven away from homes by Boko Haram insurgents or killer herdsmen were kept in internally Displaced Person's center (IDPC) that were established by the government to accommodate them become tools in the hands of those who are to cater for them, many of the young girls in displace center are manipulated and lure into criminal activities. The young girls are brainwashed and use as sex object, after suffering from the trauma of insurgent attacks, were some of them watch their husbands, sons, and related murdered in cold blood. A good example is of the wife of a staff in FCE Kontagora who was kidnapped, after some months with the kidnapers, she paid ransom and was released. In an interview with her, she narrated her ordeal and described the kidnapers as wicked, evil and callous. The memory of what she experienced still affects her psychologically up till today. (JDPC, 2022).

Resolutions of Some Organisations on Insecurity of Women

- **United Nations Resolution 1325 (2000) on Insecurity of Women &Girls**

Violence is both a means and act of domination. One person can dominate another if that person has more rights, more power and higher status. It is therefore impossible to examine the issue of women's poverty or domestic and physical violence against women without referring to the theoretical framework of citizenship and gender relations, culture, myths and behaviours that are prejudicial to women. Below are the various ways United Nation Security Resolution 1325 secured women before, during and after conflicts.

1. Citizenship

Musembic (2007), states that, the status of women is closely linked to their citizenship, it is a legal matter not one of honour. There is need to redefine the status of women and to ensure that equal rights are not merely a legal reality having no effect on women's lives, it make sense only if it is rooted in society, that is, it truly encourages self-development as well as the economic, social, political and cultural equality of all members of society.

2. Humanitarian and Emergency Situation

The United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that women and children make up between 75 and 80 percent of war refugees and displaced person Even though, women and children make up the majority of the population in the refugee's camps, women are even more disadvantaged and deprived of all decision making. According to UNHRC, an investigation conducted in refugee camps in West Africa, has implicated local male employees and exposed the extensive practice of bartering humanitarian aid and services intended for the refugees for sexual relations with girls under 18years of age. Furthermore, to this investigation, the United Nations Secretary General has instituted Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. The guidelines include Action Sheets developed for sectoral areas (protection, water and sanitation, food security and nutrition, shelter, planning sites and nonfood items, health and community services, education) and for cross – cutting functions coordination, assessment and monitoring, protection comes under both sectoral areas and cross cutting functions. (UNHRC, 2002).

3. Reintegration and Reconstruction Process:

SRC 1325(2000), calls on all actors to take into consideration the special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction. Many African countries emerging from a conflict like the case of north east Nigeria have access to a Multi- Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP) managed by the World Bank. This Programme targets 45,000 ex-combatants. According to the MDRP guidelines, national programmes are to be based on six components, including support to special groups, particularly female, children, disabled or chronically ill. To solve these problems, gender equality must be strengthened at the institutional and executive levels, and human resources devoted to gender equality must be increased (MDRP, 2006).

2014 Sovereign National Conference on Insecurity of Women

Many countries have modified their constitution to recorgnise the principle of gender equality; similarly, Nigeria also make an attempt in 2014 Sovereign National Conference to set the record straight by addressing the issue of gender equality with a cue from the security council 1325(2000) resolution, with the following submission

a. Women have the rights to affirmative action for the purpose of redressing the imbalances created by history, tradition and custom. The constitution should provide grounds to achieve at all levels at least a 35% affirmative action women;

b. Women should be accorded full and equal dignity and opportunities and the language of the Nigerian constitution shall be gender responsive e.g. the use of 'he 'or 'him' in the 1999 constitution (as amended), be replaced with he/she and him/her; men and women.

c. All discriminatory laws and practices against the female gender shall be removed from our statute book;

d. All subsidiary legislations that hold women down shall be replaced;

e. Women shall have constitutional rights to property inheritance and full employment right without discrimination

f. A woman shall be constitutionally allowed to enjoy the citizenship of her place of origin (birth) or of her husband (her place of marriage);

g. There shall be constitutional provision for women not to be subject to any form of culture, custom, traditions and practices that undermine the status of women, and/or that derogate women's welfare, dignity, interests and aspirations. So, also to recorgnise a child as a person below the age of 18years and section 29 (4) (b) which states: "any woman (irrespective of her age) who is married shall be deemed of full age" shall be removed from the constitution. (1999 Constitution as amended).

Recommendations

According to Bamidele (1989), ironically, the techniques used by the Nigerian government in the management of these conflicts and protection of women from insecurity are demonstrably very poor and counterproductive. Therefore, there is need for synergy among the security agencies, Human rights organisations, both government and private owned, religious bodies to explore and examine the Nigerian institutional frame-work for internal security with a view to understanding the strategies to be adopted to overcome the security threat posed by domestic and physical violence against women, gender equality and all other forms of sufferings and discriminations women go through. With the level of insecurity in the northern part of Nigeria, Niger State, Kontagora in particular, this paper recommends that;

First, the current government under the leadership of Bola Hammed Tinubu and government of Niger State should take the bull by the horn and give more attention to women and girls who are vulnerable in this area, by addressing their needs in matters of protection and reintegration.

Secondly, transition programmes developed by governments, in partnership with the United Nations system, should incorporate the specific needs of women and girls affected by conflicts and ensure their full rehabilitation, reintegration, as well as community rehabilitation programmes (socio-economic infrastructure, micro-finances, capacity-building).

Thirdly, government should empower women and meet their basic needs, with a view to more structural changes in gender imbalances, efforts are needed in the three main directions.

Fourthly, attention should be paid to Programme to strengthen women participation in politics and local governance, including consideration of an affirmative action policy with quotas.

Fifth, increasing girls access to primary and secondary schools should be a priority, but given the interest in and legitimacy of Quranic education in northern state, it should also be upgraded by introducing a dual curriculum. Mainstream Islamic groups should empower female members to do their part to help alleviate the humanitarian crisis.

The state should take steps to combat gender discrimination and stereotypes rooted in law and practice, to ensure women and girls have more control over their lives. Finally, if one of the mandates of the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is to "see to the development and good governance of the country" then it must immediately reverse its stance on the gender equality bill without further delay.

Conclusion

In conclusion, women in Kontagora Emirate suffer more from appalling violence and abuse that add to the burdens of stifling patriarchy, insurgence attacks, and exploitation of women, including sexual and gender-based violence. Many women have been exploited, abused and displaced, while others have played active roles in the insurgency and the counter insurgency. However, one of the major challenges facing Nigeria as a country is the continued marginalization of a highly competent and effective segment of her population and their inability to contribute to national development because of the physical, social and cultural restrictions placed on them. Women have been most adversely affected by this phenomenon, and unless the situation is changed, the country vis-à-vis Kontagora Emirate, is unlikely to achieve true integrated national development, though the principles in the 1999 constitution as amended, does not always guarantee the end of discrimination against women. People still continue to rely on customary law rather than constitutional law and this obstacle can be removed only by massive and repeated effort. However, the SCR 1325(2000) fundamentally has changed the image of women from being exclusively victims of war to being participants as peacemakers, peace-builders and negotiators. Women at the grassroots as diverse as Nigeria and other African countries have used this resolution and other government and none government resolution as discussed in this work to lobby for their voices of women to be heard in peace building processes, in pre and post-conflict crises, and in rebuilding of their societies.

Finally, the multiple ways women experience and engage with the conflict need to be fully understood and directly inform policies for alleviating their suffering and paving the way for reconciliation and rebuilding society. Women need help from the authorities and their internal partners, but careful thought and planning is

required to ensure its effective delivery. Women need support not only to gain more control over their lives, but also to become actors and decision-makers in peace and conflict time

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