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**SCHOOL ABDUCTIONS IN CHIBOK AND ZAMFARA, NIGERIA:
THE NEXUS BETWEEN GENDER, TERROR AND OFFICIAL
RESPONSES**

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Master's Thesis in International Relations

Department of international Environment and Development Studies

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Official Responses

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Acknowledgment

I first thank God Almighty for sustaining me to this very moment of my life. The hurdles were manifold, but His grace has been sufficient to see me through. Second, to my ever-caring mother, your constant communication made me feel not far from home, and this made me very much alive to strive for the best. Immense gratitude goes to my wonderful Supervisor, Poul Wisborg, Ph.D. Your professionalism, attentive reading, understanding, and readiness to always listen to my worries are something that I cannot forget. Now to the love of my life, I want to say I cherish every single day of the care, the inspiration, and the unflinching love you continue to show me.

Abstract

School abductions in Nigeria have received global attention since 2014. Although several studies exist on gender-based terrorism in Nigeria, none has sought to understand the relationship between gender, gender constructions, terror directed towards women and girls, and official responses. This thesis, therefore, addresses gender-based terrorism in Nigeria by focusing on responses to terror on women and the girl-child. Specifically, it analyses how gender and gender constructions influenced extremist groups in Nigeria to perpetrate violence against women and girls and what responses this generated from officials nationally and internationally. The research used both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews with academics, journalists, officials in Nigeria, and national and international organizations. The secondary data was sourced from academic publications, video material, reports, and other information released by non-governmental organizations, the media, and state institutions in Nigeria. The findings indicate that the socio-cultural fabric of the Nigerian society influenced the reasons for and rationale behind abductions of women and girls in the country. The study found that the socio-cultural fabric of the Nigerian society had created a sense of value for women and girls, which made extremist organizations in the country regard them as, firstly, a vital economic tool for bargaining and wealth making and, secondly, as a source of achieving group cohesion and loyalty among the extremists. The research also found that official responses to the cases under study were influenced by many factors, including gender, education, human rights abuses and forced separation from families; they also reflected concern with the rise of the Islamic State (IS) coupled with the objectives of Boko Haram. Moreover, the construction of gender and gender relations was connected to terror directed towards women and girls, and to the official responses to terror, through the unequal social and power relation, and the sense of value conditioned by the construction of gender, which created an avenue for extremists to exploit women and girls for their strategic advantage. Therefore, the study argues that fostering societal transformation, promotion of gender-sensitive prevention of violent extremism, and the enactment of comprehensive legislation are key factors in challenging gender-based violence, including terror. Overall, the thesis contributes to the growing literature on gender-based terrorism and the growing number of studies in international relations that focus on gender.

Keywords: Gender, Abductions, Violent Extremism, Nigeria, Chibok, Zamfara, Terror, School, Bandits, Boko Haram, Women, and Girls

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List of Abbreviations

GBV	Gender-Based Violence
VAW	Violence Against Women
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
NSS	National Security Strategy

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

According to Omilusi, (2019), poverty, hunger, terror, and insecurity are widespread during violent crises, making the population more vulnerable, and often women and girls are most affected. Women and girls are exposed to physical, cultural, and psychological violence to varying degrees in all cultures, although this is also affected by income, class, or community (Omilusi, 2019). Jakobsen (2014:1) argues that violence is often regarded as gendered because it is committed against women. The assumption has been that gender is irrelevant if violence is also committed against men. However, according to UNCHR (2001:7), “Gender-based violence is physical, mental or social violence and abuse (including sexual violence) that includes acts (attempted or threatened) carried out with or without force and without the consent of the victim. The violence is directed against a person because of her or his gender (because she is a woman or because he is a man) or gender role in a society or culture”. Understood in this sense, both men and women may be victims and perpetrators of violence, and it is considered gender-based due to the construction of gender ideas that justify or naturalize it (Carpenter, 2017).

The act of terror keeps looming larger in our world today. On many occasions, both state and non-state actors have used terrorism as a tactic to compel people, organizations, or regimes to kowtow to or respond favorably to their demands (Wariboko, 2016). However, compounding the menacing issue of terrorism is the gendered path that acts of terror seem to be taking in some cases. Civil war, inter-and intra-ethnic conflict, and religious conflict have featured in Nigeria's history (Omilusi, 2019). Issues related to the security of women and the protection of the girl-child have become paramount in Nigeria, especially in the face of the growing number of abductions involving schoolgirls in the country. The cycle of gender-based abduction and detention and increased violence have been on the rise in the country since 2013 (Zenn and Pearson, 2014). While insecurity has affected the whole of Nigeria in the past few years, the northern region can be said to be the most affected. This is due to attacks by the notorious terrorist group Boko Haram, and other armed gangs that have ripped through most of the Northern part of the country, capturing villages and towns and keeping the inhabitant hostage (Omilusi, 2019). Zenn and Pearson (2014) argue that terrorism, like other modes of violence and insurgency, has taken on a gendered dimension in

Nigeria and elsewhere. Wariboko (2016) contends that women and girls are now bearing the brunt, as they now seem to be the principal target of terrorists. The severity of this problem was seen in the case of the 276 schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram in the North-eastern town of Chibok in 2014. According to Omilusi (2019), although these girls became victims of the attack, the incident also made the girls a symbol of Nigeria's brutal conflict in the North. He further indicates that the abduction of the girls brought to light the unique role that women and girls have come to assume in armed conflict in Nigeria. The brazen abduction took the uprising to the attention of the world, eliciting worldwide indignation and rallying support from a broad spectrum of local and foreign actors. Adding to this is the recent abduction of more than 300 schoolgirls by unidentified armed gangs (who are broadly categorized as 'Bandits' locally) in Zamfara, Western-Nigeria (BBC, 2021). These 'Bandits', believed to number over 3,000 in the north-western region of Nigeria, have rendered everyday living into a constant state of terror through mass attacks in cities and rural areas. These armed men operate from haven of forests covering central and north-western Nigeria into Niger. Even though women and girls are strongly affected by insecurity in Northern Nigeria, few studies have paid attention to issues related to gender and the security and protection of women and the girl-child in Nigeria. Therefore, this research seeks to investigate the relationship between gender, gender constructions, terror directed towards women and girls, and official responses to the abductions in Nigeria. The study uses a qualitative research approach, drawing insights from both primary and secondary sources and using a desk analysis and thematic analysis approach as the analytical tools.

1.2 Research Problem and Justification

Women's involvement in a militant and radical activity is not a new phenomenon, and their role as perpetrators, victims, and recruiters may be on the rise worldwide (Agara, 2017). Works by Gentry (2010), Agara (2017), Haner et al. (2020), Bloom (2017), speak on this matter. While it is now apparent that terrorism is no longer solely perpetrated by men and that women may play active roles, much remains unclear about women as victims of terrorism—particularly our understanding of how gender and gender constructions influence terror and official responses to terror events. Thus, while there are several studies on gender-based violence and gender-based terrorism on women in Nigeria, a gap existed for a study that will investigate the relationship between gender, gender constructions, terror, and officials' responses. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this lacuna by using the cases of the abductions in Chibok and Zamfara communities in Nigeria. The need for this work, therefore, lies in the fact that it focuses on how gender influences terror directed towards

women and the girl-child. The work will examine what conditioned the official responses to the abductions in the two cases to generate insights that may help us understand what shapes official responses to terror.

1.3 Research Objectives

The study aims to contribute to understanding the relationship between constructions of gender, gender relations, extremist violence against women and girls, and the responses it generates from officials by examining the cases of school abductions in Chibok and Zamfara, Nigeria. First, the study seeks to understand gendered causes and rationality behind the abduction of women and girls in Nigeria. Second, the study assesses the official responses to abductions nationally and internationally to understand what shaped these responses. Thirdly, the study seeks to understand the connection between gender relations and constructions of gender, terror directed towards women and girls, and official responses.

1.4 Thesis Structure

This thesis is developed as follows: First, I present this introductory chapter, which comprises background of the study, statement of the problem and justification, research objectives, and the thesis structure. Chapter Two is a literature review which highlights and explains specific themes within the research problem. In Chapter Three, I present the research questions, and the research design, methods used, and activities undertaken to address the research objectives. In Chapter Four, I present the cases grounding this work, and discuss the findings of the study in accordance with the research questions. Finally, in Chapter Five, I draw the conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Background

In Nigeria, the incidents of abductions have increased dramatically in recent years, affecting both males and females. However, women and girls constitute the majority of those affected by abductions in the country. This chapter reviews literature to explore the topic by identifying and examining themes that are central to the research problem. It begins by defining key concepts to facilitate the understanding of the various concept as used for the purpose of this research. The chapter moves on to explore the relationship between gender stereotypes and terror, the relationship of masculinities and femininities to terror, gender-based violence in Nigeria, gender and violent extremism in Nigeria, and radicalization. Specifically, in section 2.2, the definition of concepts and how it is used in the study are presented. Section 2.3 and its subsections investigate different aspects of gender and terrorism, and these include gender stereotypes in relation to terror, the relationship of masculinities and femininities to terror, among others.

2.2 Definition of Key Concepts

2.2.1 Gender

The concept of gender transcends the biological categorization of maleness and femaleness. It is associated with the characteristics that maleness and femaleness are expected to have (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2011). According to Phillips (2005:1), gender is a social rather than a biological construct and therefore varies with the roles, norms and values of a given society. Philip therefore indicates that “gender refers to the roles and expectations attributed to men and women in a given society, roles which change over time, place, and life stage”. For instance, while caring for babies has long been considered unmanly in various cultures, the "caring father" has increasingly become an ideal and a norm in many communities, particularly in Nordic countries, where welfare arrangements allow fathers to take time off from work to care for their young children (Korsvik and Rustad, 2018). Ridgeway (2009) notes that gender is a key category for structuring social relations; it is a kind of human variation that is extremely vulnerable or highly dictated by culture. Therefore, according to Zevallos (2014), gender is about how cultures define and maintain differences in sex categories, as well as the cultural definitions attached to men and women's roles and how people interpret their identities, such as being a man, woman, transgender, intersex, gender queer, and other gender positions. Wharton (2011:8) shows that gender is created through social interaction and

intrinsically contextual in its impact; therefore, gender cannot be reduced to an identity or a set of personal traits. Tiessen et al. (2017:88) add that gender emphasizes the socially constructed attitudes and practices associated with women, femininity, and men, masculinity, and their impact on the gender relations and hierarchies that shape gendered access to power and influence in a particular society. From these, one can deduce that the term gender is embedded in society, and it is relational. It corresponds to how society shapes our understanding of biological categories. Gender therefore shows a system of cultural differences that is crucial to sexuality and reproduction, as well as a line of difference among people who must frequently collaborate. The male–female divide is therefore almost invariably one of a society's major cultural categories. Wariboko (2016) citing (Ritzer and Stepnisky, 2014) argues that since women's experiences sparked gender studies in the first place, gender has been more used to refer to women and their issues. However, since gender has been noted to be relational, understanding what women are, and can be, requires understanding what men are, and can be. The relations between men and women shapes the experiences they face in society (Wharton, 2011). Gender is a multidimensional social system, and as such affects every aspect of social life (Wharton, 2011). Although gender is not a binary variable, it is often portrayed as a dichotomous variable associated with woman/man or female/male. For this research, the concept of gender is conceived as non-binary. However, it expects that a binary pattern of women and men may shape the position that women and the girls have come to assume in the terrorist events analyzed. This relates to the observation that the feminine gender is increasingly becoming a target of terrorists.

2.2.2 Terror

According to the Merriam Webster dictionary, terror connotes violent or destructive acts (such as bombing) committed by groups to promote their goals. Tilly (2004) defines terror as a unitary form of political action undertaken by actors (terrorists) to establish a kind of politics (terrorism). Thus, terror is a political strategy deployed asymmetrically in the form of threat and violence against an enemy using means that are not used in normal political struggle within regimes. Since terror is a political strategy, it can be undertaken by a wide variety of individuals and organizations, and they can most often alternate between using terror and other political tactics (Tilly, 2004). According to Agara (2017), the act of terror has three basic components, which are a) the perpetrator, b) the victim, and c) the target of the violence, but these are not going to explained extensively. However, it can be expressed that terror is a means to an end. As such, in this study, terror is therefore used

to refer to the nefarious activity of abductions adopted by armed groups in Nigeria as a way of realizing their objectives.

2.2.3 Official Responses

Today's terrorists wield unparalleled authority, but the state continues to play a critical role in the success or failure of their schemes. Terrorists rely on government inaction, tolerance, and support, while citizens look to the government to protect them from terrorist threats and actions (Becker, 2006). The preservation of national security is therefore a fundamental government function. As (Becker, 2006) has shown, per the principle of social contract, citizens have entrusted the state with their personal security, and the state is obliged to use its powers for their benefit. If a state therefore abdicates its responsibility relative to terrorism on its territory, then the State's sovereign prerogative is of no essence to individual security. Despite variations in directness of attack, all attacks generate behavioral, attitudinal, and emotional responses in the affected population (Cohen, 2002). Thus, the dimensions of attacks condition the nature of response. To counter threats and actions of terrorists, States use a growing collection of legal frameworks, administrative tools, cooperative mechanisms, forcible measures etc. However, for the purpose of this study, official responses to an event of terror are conceptualized as the verbal or policy actions taken by governments and international actors (such as human right organization, political or private influential personalities, and organizations for women and girls).

2.2.4 Abduction

Abduction refers to when a person is carried away from his or her original place by convincing him or her, by some act of deceit, or by a forceful method that may involve violence but mostly without a demand for ransom (HG Legal Resources..org, 2021). Notwithstanding, in this study, this term is used to mean the forceful capture of women and girls by extremist groups in Nigeria for varied purposes.

2.3 Gender and Terrorism

This section explores themes relevant to gender and terrorism. In subsection 2.3.1, gender stereotype is explored in relation to terror, while section 2.3.2 explores masculinity and femininity in relation to terror. Subsections 2.3.3 and 2.3.4 respectively look into gender-based violence in Nigeria, and the connection between gender and violent extremism in Nigeria, and section 2.3.5 addresses how gender construction and gender relations can induce radicalization into violent extremism.

2.3.1 Gender Stereotypes and Terror

The usage of sex or gender to define oneself and others as a fundamental cultural framework drives the content of gender stereotypes to concentrate on the presumed disparities. As expressed by Möller-Leimkühler (2018), even though an act of terror can be undertaken by both men and women, it is men who are mostly associated or noted to be the perpetrators of violent extremism. Despite the evidence that women perpetrate violence, scholars often perceived women as victims of violence rather than perpetrators (Banks, 2019). Mahmood (2019) argues that the rigidity of masculinity as violent and femininity as nonviolent in terrorism misconstrues women's participation in terror. According to Mahmood (2019), this misperception has established a dogma where the presumption of males as violent and females as nonviolent is held to be absolute and unchanging. Also, because of their ostensibly nonviolent presence in a violent community, females are seen as secondary participants or recruits and as such insignificant to the general operation of an armed group since they form a fraction of the group. Möller-Leimkühler (2018) asserts that gender differences in participation in terrorism can be understood through the lens of motivation. While male terrorists have been seen as committed to a cause and willing to use violence to accomplish their objectives, females participating in terrorism are often regarded as acting against her will or something more psychological, because it is seen as deviating from their gendered expectation of being nurturing and peaceful (Möller-Leimkühler, 2018; Schmidt, 2020). This suggests that when women are identified in legitimate military forces as perpetrators of violent acts or supporters, they sometimes face gendered stereotypes that reject their agency and degrade their role (Schmidt, 2020). Mahmood (2019) also indicates that, while men are thought to join extremist groups for political purposes, women are thought to join for personal (feminine) reasons. For instance, Mahmood (2019) states that in the context of Islamist terrorism men are believed to participate in

violent jihad to protect the principles or interests of their groups, while women play a supporting role through aiding men in protecting and encouraging violence.

Möller-Leimkühler (2018) argues that throughout history men have been the major perpetrators of violence and abuse and that violence, whether by individuals or groups, such as wars, violent conflict, genocides, or terrorism, is a male-dominated phenomenon. Alan (1999) agrees about the central role of men in violence and violent extremism, on the grounds that men have done the bulk of the killings and are the majority of the victims. Thus, he notes that wars are predominantly fought by men who kill and get killed. Oluyemi-Kusa and Salihu (2015:124) therefore assert that, “communities have had more men die than women, and more men than women have been beaten and bruised.” According to Banks (2019), the widespread assumption that terrorists are predominantly male is due to the limited number of female terrorists, gender stereotypes, and the fact that women were largely written out of terrorism research until recently. Banks noted that women have long been part of terrorist movements as both fighters and supporters (Banks, 2019:182). Citing Gentry and Sjoberg (2016, p. 149), Banks (2019) asserts that in the most recent *Religious Wave*, women have played a number of roles in insurgencies and uprisings in Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and elsewhere, ranging from support personnel to actual perpetrators of terrorist attacks. Nnam et al. (2018:35) also argue that women have played and are still playing prominent roles in a number of terror campaigns in the world. For instance, militant organizations such as the “Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA, Basque Homeland and Unity), the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the Italian Red Brigades (IRD), and the Tamil Tigers all had powerful and sometimes fearsome female participants” (Nnam et al., 2018:35). Women were also active in Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC), the German Red Army Faction, and the Chechen Separatists (Nnam et al., 2018). According to Schmidt (2020), ignoring the ability of women to take reasoned decision-making to be a part of political violence facilitates discounting them as political actors—and their exclusion from politics and reintegration programs. Therefore, it is essential for national security programs to see women as valuable political actors with agency and as such approach security issues with a holistic approach.

2.3.2 Masculinities, Femininities and Terror

Palan et al. (1999) and Mahmood (2019) argue that to be masculine or feminine is the result of socialization, and therefore masculinity and femininity are relative terms that differ across cultures, times, and populations. Mimi (2007) argues that masculinities and femininities provide a

legitimizing rationale not just for individual embodiment and behavior, but also for coordinating, assessing, and controlling societal practices, which grounds their hegemonic significance. Thus, masculinity and femininity and their construed relationship with each other are a reason for practice and for judging not just individuals gender displays and practices, but all societal relations, policies, regulations and institutional practices and structures. This demonstrates that we cannot speak of male and female, masculinities, and femininities as opposites but rather as a continuum with numerous possibilities and distinctions.

Kelmendi (2019:22) assert that the role of women in contemporary terrorist groups is often underestimated in public opinion, whereas male violence is portrayed as the standard. He outlines that some justify men's participation in violent extremist movements by saying that “boys will be boys”, implying that there is no reason to wonder why men become violent. According to Kelmendi (2019), these assumptions are often founded on gender roles rather than fact, and they default to characteristics that are traditionally ascribed to males and females. Mahmood (2019) also notes that in research on violent extremism, for instance, men are primarily portrayed in the roles of warriors and protectors of women and children, while women take on the roles of heroic housewife, sacrificial mother and loving wife, However, the question remains about how violence relates to, and may even be a constitutive part of masculinity. Möller-Leimkühler (2018) states that many social scientists see masculinity as mainly a sociocultural phenomenon, while she argues that it is influenced by genetically determined sex variations in brain structure and function and stress response. As such, while males may not necessarily be 'hardwired' (naturally inclined) for violence, they are more likely than females to engage in aggression and violence (Möller-Leimkühler, 2018). To Dowd (2010), masculinity, in whatever form, is socially created, and is a collection of behaviors that one engages in or performs regularly. In that sense, Dowd notes that it is interactive: the person interacts with the social/cultural structure, but he or she can also rebuild and modify it, rather than just follow what has been laid down. Dowd (2010:26) further asserts that because masculinity is a social construct, “it opposes and challenges the concept of a fixed or stable sex role that one acquires, as well as the notion of masculinity as an inevitable stage of development from child to adult, from boy to man”. According to Meiering et al. (2020), the construction of masculinity as heroic exalts aggression and violence as male virtues. Möller-Leimkühler, (2018) substantiates this by indicating that, for instance, the portrayal of males as the holy warrior who dies a martyr and is proclaimed a hero both before and after his death are embodied in the construction of males as fighters. This reinforces aggression and violence as the primary ways of demonstrating and

constructing masculinity. According to Möller-Leimkühler (2018), since men may be seen as the owners and protectors of the dignity of female family members, they must therefore defend their own and their families' reputations, even if it means resorting to violence because loss of honor brings shame and emasculation. Ferber and Kimmel (2008) remark that masculinity must be demonstrated since it can never be proven, and when seen as vulnerable and in danger, it must be shown frequently. In this sense, Ferber and Kimmel (2008:885) argue that like any form of violence, terrorism becomes a restorative act of reclaiming a lost yet rightful authority. Thus, in extreme cases terror may become a means of restoring a damaged masculinity (Ferber and Kimmel, 2008:874). Notwithstanding, Dowd (2010) argues that since masculinity is a social creation, while it may be primarily used or done by men, it does not need a naturally masculine body. Women may also be masculine, and they can express masculinity in diverse ways.

Women are not typically seen as violent perpetrators and are most often portrayed as needing protection from "gallant" and "naturally violent-oriented" men (Mahmood , 2019). According to Mahmood (2019:12) femininity is frequently linked to a woman's biological capacity to give birth and thus a role of life-givers rather than life-takers. Due to this, Poloni-Staudinger and Ortals (2014) suggest that all-female jihadists are regarded as "interlopers", as the act is regarded as belonging in a male domain. Sjoberg and Gentry (2011) show that women and warfare or violence are not traditionally linked, and the idea of women as militants, terrorists, or suicide bombers runs counter to many cultures' dominant notions of femininity. Masculine and feminine expectations have traditionally been assigned to all gender identities based on stereotypical perceptions of their attributes. As such, women's positions in terrorism are often limited to the domestic realm, as mothers, daughters, and wives (Margolin, 2019; Mahmood , 2019). According to Margolin (2019), these divisions does not necessarily suggest trivializing women's roles. It is worth noting that despite the existing divisions, women's positions are evolving in response to the rise of new groups and challenges. Mahmood (2019:13) argues that since the rise of Islamic State (IS), in which women were explicitly empowered to become suicide bombers and contributed to the establishment of the caliphate, the narrative around femininity and nonviolence has shifted. Hearne (2009) asserts that while formerly limited to more auxiliary positions, female members of militant terrorist organizations are now actively involved in attacks, including suicide bombings, attracting public disbelief and increased media attention.

Notwithstanding, Hardy (2001) notes that, while armed war and extremism affect entire nations, women and girls are disproportionately affected due to their social status and gender. Hardy (2001) states that women are often raped with impunity by opposing parties, who often use organized violence like war and terrorist tactics (Hardy, 2001). However, Poloni-Staudinger and Ortals (2014) claim that women are not just victims of organized violence but function also as perpetrators with great agency. For instance, Nnam et al. (2018) show that the panic surrounding bomb attacks in parts of Nigeria is not due to the quick succession or severity of it but by the fact that the attacks were carried out by women and children, most of which are girls, most of whom were captured and radicalized. Therefore, while this may seem controversial, women have contributed in non-violent capacities but also as perpetrators in violent extremism, not only as victims.

2.3.3 Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a global issue and human rights problem that affects people of all ages and genders. While the word "gender-based violence" is often used to refer to violence against women, gender-based equally exist among and against men (Oladepo et al., 2011). However, the 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (VAW), defines the term as "any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" (Adeyanju, 2020; Oladepo et al., 2011). Oladepo et al., (2011) indicate that in countries worldwide an estimated 8 to 70 percent of women have been physically and sexually abused by a male partner at least once in their lives. Omilusi (2019) indicates that women are particularly vulnerable to violence and that their exposure varies by country, although violence against women is a worldwide issue. Women are subjected to various types of violence, including physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence, both within and outside their homes. Although, the majority of gender-based violence investigations have focused on men as the perpetrators of violence, men also become victims of gender-based violence. Men bear a share of the negative effects of domestic violence (Oladepo et al., 2011:79). However, Zenn and Pearson (2014) holds that GBV affects women disproportionately in Nigeria, regardless of their region, religion or ethnicity. Chika (2012:138) argues that the social background of such violence is the African patriarchal society which defines gender power structures. This may be why Oladepo et al. (2011) indicate that women's greater exposure to GBV in Nigeria may be attributed to a cultural permissiveness that justifies men's physical violence against women. To Chika (2012), although culture is a core factor, the legal,

educational, economic and political factors are the most challenging. Zenn and Pearson (2014) indicate that that female genital mutilation, forced marriage, and widowhood rites such as hair cutting and confinement to the home have been part of Nigerian cultural customs. Again, Zenn and Pearson (2014:46) underscore that “Nigerian law is also infused with discriminatory practices against women, including an implied legal backing to the assault of a wife in Section 55 of the penal code, and, in Section 6 of the criminal code, a lack of legal recognition for rape within marriage”. In addition, Chika (2012:143) argues that the Nigerian government's failure to adopt most international instruments on women's rights, and the prevalence of several other entrenched outdated legislation that are strongly patriarchal against women, and the absence of gender-based violence laws, are among the factors that leave women constantly vulnerable. Haaga et al. (2015), argues that violence against females is a major threat to peace and security in Nigeria since it jeopardizes women and girls' basic rights, freedoms, health, well-being, and national progress. However, men also are affected by GBV in Nigeria. For instance, Zenn and Pearson (2014) indicate that security forces in Nigeria have used physical and sexual violence against some men in detention to humiliate and disempower them. Gender-based violence has far-reaching implications for people's overall well-being and has an effect on all facets of their lives. Intervention measures, such as public education about the effects of gender-based violence on men and women, are thus necessary.

2.3.4 Gender and Violent Extremism in Nigeria

Omilusi (2019) citing Enloe (1993) indicates that all armed conflicts are gendered and that gendered decisions characterize postwar eras. Both men and women suffer from the traumas, abuses, and devastations brought on by war, but the experience and vulnerability to these conditions differ between the genders (Omilusi, 2019). Gardam and Charlesworth (2000) also note that the effects of armed conflicts differ across cultures, which define the roles of gender in a particular society. Armed conflict often exacerbates societal inequalities that occur in differing degrees in all cultures, making women especially vulnerable when armed conflict ensues. Omilusi (2019) argues that violence towards women is sometimes used as a means of war either to dehumanize the women themselves or to persecute the society to which they belong. However, Gardam and Charlesworth (2000:152) assert that armed conflict is not always negative in its impact on all women: “For some women, it can be a time of empowerment as they take roles traditionally performed by men. In some cases, armed conflict removes abusive partners from the home and allows women the opportunity to develop new skills” (Gardam and Charlesworth, 2000). Therefore, assessing the

effects of armed conflict on women demands taking into account a broad range of factors that vary greatly across cultures and among women within cultures (Gardam and Charlesworth (2000).

Terrorism as a form of armed conflict may take place in the form of armed opposition to the state or in the service of the state's interests (Crenshaw, 1981). Many of the world's terrorist organizations today are non-state actors, using porous borders and integrated international networks like banking, communications, and transport to penetrate every corner of the globe with varied purposes (Omilusi, 2019). After the rise of the Boko Haram insurgency in 2001, anchored on the ideology that "western education is bad," the group's collisions with Nigerian authorities have taken over 5000 lives, including women and children (Badmus, 2016). Boko Haram has killed and abducted dozens of boys and girls in a series of brutal school attacks in Nigeria's Northeast. The most famous is the Chibok girls abduction in 2014 but it is just a small portion of women targeted and abducted by the insurgent group (MacEachern, 2020). Omilusi (2019) notes that the emergence of Boko Haram and its insurgency has drastically altered the lives of thousands of women and children, frequently forcing them into new positions beyond the home. They do menial work for and are subjected to both sexual and non-sexual abuse by the organization's male members (MacEachern, 2020). According to Njoku and Akintayo (2021:287), the existing gender identities, structures, and inequalities in Nigerian society during peacetime, including the logic that women are naturally expected to satisfy their male partners sexually and that men have authority over and the right to women's bodies, have transition in making women vulnerable to sexual violence during moment of violent conflict. Bloom and Matfess (2014) argues that rebel groups, and terrorist organizations use sexual violence against women as a strategy to achieve their goals, including achieving group cohesion and loyalty by providing women as rewards for marriage or to satisfying the group's sexual desires. Njoku and Akintayo (2021:288) argues that the subjection of women and girls to sexual violence is not only an integral part of warfare but also "... as a symbol of humiliating opponents or enemies, as a means of reaffirming masculinity, and as an end product of misogyny". Bloom and Matfess (2014) also add that sexual violence is a display of rage, and dominance. As Maiangwa and Agbiboa (2014) note, the abduction of schoolgirls by Boko Haram reflects one of the jihadist groups' defining characteristics: the abuse of women and their continued marginalization in comparison to their male counterparts. Religious convictions, laws, cultural norms, and socioeconomic status all contribute to the susceptibility of women and girls in northern Nigeria to extremists and criminals.

Compounding Nigeria's already complex security situation is the emergence of a new community known as bandits in the Middle Belt and North Central regions (Ojo, 2020). Ojo (2020:80) notes that “they [bandits] operate under the guise of kidnapping and cattle rustling, mostly targeting villages such as Zamfara, Kaduna, Kastina, and Sokoto states”. A report by Al-Jazeera in March 2021 shows that in at least five different incidents since December 2020, bandit groups have abducted a total of 769 students from their boarding schools and other educational facilities across northern Nigeria seeking lucrative ransom. Arguably, Boko Haram has turned the North-East into a battleground, while the North-West States such as Sokoto, Zamfara, Kaduna, and Kastina have become hotspots for bandits (Ojo, 2020). Insecurity destroys life. Oluyemi-Kusa and Salihu (2015) note that the tendency to escape conflict and its repercussions leads to displacement and the destruction of lives and property. It also leads to a relentless fear of attacks, which robs people of their freedom and right to organize and to seek and engage in making good livelihoods.

Violent extremism in Nigeria entails abduction and forced conscription of males and females, but the role of women abuses and women’s experiences in this event are more nuanced. This is because, while women and girls may be highly victimized, they have equally perpetrated extremist actions. For instance, Hassan (2017) and Nwangwu and Ezeibe (2019) observe that between 2011 and 2017, 244 of the 434 suicide bombers used by Boko Haram were females, and between 2014 and 2017, girls and women in northeast Nigeria alone carried out over 100 suicide bombings. However, Wariboko (2016) wonders whether these women consented to be martyrs or were coerced to become pawns for the propagation of terror.

2.3.5 Gender and Radicalization into Violent Extremism

Radicalization is an ambiguous term (Hansen and Lid, 2020; Schuurman and Taylor, 2018). However, it is used to refer to the process through which an individual or a group begins to regard violence as an acceptable and desirable way of attaining their objectives (Özerdem and Podder, 2011). Borum (2011) asserts that radicalization has two connotations: radicalized into accepting radical beliefs and radicalized into violent extremism. The interest here, therefore, is in radicalization into violent extremism. According to Schuurman and Taylor (2018), adopting radical views is neither a necessary nor sufficient prerequisite for violent extremism involvement. Thus, not all radicals are violent or engage in violent extremism, and radical ideas that do not condone violence and therefore operate within the confines of law could be seen as acceptable. However, since this thesis is interested in radicalization into violent extremism, radicalization is therefore

defined here as a social and psychological process in which an individual or a group regard and commits acts of violence as a way of achieving different objectives (Ahmed and Milan, 2020; Özerdem and Podder, 2011).

Radicalization has a substantial gender component, both because women and men are vulnerable to various motivations and because terrorist organizations may target, recruit, and utilize them (men and women) in different ways. On the general level, the OSCE (2019) has emphasized that factors such as gender-based injustice and discrimination, violence against women, and a lack of educational and economic opportunities may be drivers of women's radicalization. However, women's support for terrorism could also stem from their own beliefs and experiences as women. Moreover, human rights violations against women can exacerbate emotions of alienation, loneliness, and exclusion, making them more vulnerable to radicalization. Robinsmith (2018) however argues that women who are dissatisfied with their subordinated status in society are not necessarily more vulnerable to radicalization; their dissatisfaction may catalyze them to change their personal circumstances through self-development and community dialogue, but those who reluctantly conform to their subordination are vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment.

Traditional gender norms have an impact on both men and women, but women face additional challenges from norms and oppression that seek to conform and subordinate them, particularly in patriarchal societies. Notwithstanding, men who struggle to achieve traditional masculine standards, such as being the primary breadwinner, being respected and revered, or having access to sexual partners of their choosing, may think that violent extremism organizations provide an appealing option for confirming their masculinity. As Noonan (2018) notes, men who have been socially trivialized may experience discontent and frustration that lead them to engage in behaviors that are assumed and depicted as tools for recovering self-worth and masculine efficacy. Pearson and Winterbotham (2017) contend that jihadist groups attract men because they provide young men with a high-status brand of masculinity, since they are viewed as "rock stars" of militant Islam. ISIL/Daesh propaganda, for example, frequently portrays warriors as hypermasculine defenders of the faith or community, out of which comes wealth and sexual gratification (Pearson and Winterbotham, 2017). In his quest to show how Jihadist construct masculinity to attract young men, Necef (2016:4) writes:

Islam restores the family and social bonds on a sane basis, according to men's needs. According to the Koran, a man has the right to marry up to four wives, on condition of being 'just' toward

them; he can impose, in the name of Allah, ‘modesty’ on women and exert his authority toward children within a patriarchal family. In the Jihadists’ minds, this dimension is connected to another, the rejection of Western sexual and, more generally, gender values.

As Cooper et al. (2021) note, harmful gender constructions can negatively affect men and boys with wide-reaching implications including engaging in extremist activities. Harway and O’Neil (1999) argue that emasculation is painful for men and may therefore trigger regression, aggression, and violent attitude as it jeopardizes a man’s gender role identity. As such, “in danger of being emasculated, men may struggle to fulfil the cultural understanding of manliness within their culture even if it demands aggressive words and violence, to restore his masculinity.” (Harway and O’Neil, 1999; Lorentzen, 2011). Radicalization is a complex process influenced by a variety of factors that affect both genders. It behooves governments to curb radicalization both before it begins and after it has developed, and to do this effectively requires a thorough comprehension of the radicalization process and motivation of both women and men.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Questions

The objectives of this study were to, firstly, understand the gendered causes and rationality behind the abduction of women and girls in Nigeria. Secondly, to assess and understand the official responses to the abductions nationally and internationally and what shapes these responses. And finally, to provide insights into the connection between gender relations and constructions of gender, terror directed towards women and girls, and the official responses in the cases and contexts studied. To fulfil these objectives, the following research questions will be addressed:

1. How does gender affect the outlook and strategies of violent extremist groups in Nigeria?
2. What were, and what factors shaped, the national and international responses to the school abductions? Were there differences in the responses to the Chibok and Zamfara cases and, if so, what explains these differences?
3. What do the cases tell us about the links between constructions of gender, gender relations, terror directed towards women and girls, and official responses to terror?

3.2 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research approach. It is a multiple case study focusing on the abduction cases of Chibok and Zamfara in Nigeria to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between gender, terror, and official responses. The Chibok abduction happened on 14 April 2014 where 276 girls aged 11–18 were kidnapped from a school in Chibok, in northeast Nigeria as they were about to sit their final year exam. The radical Islamist group, Boko Haram, took responsibility for the attack. The Zamfara abduction on other hand happened on 26 February 2021 where more than 300 secondary school girls were kidnapped by unidentified armed gangs (who are broadly categorized as ‘Bandits’ locally) in Jangebe town, Zamfara State. By using a case study means that data is evaluated in the context of its application (Yin, 2011). Using multiple case studies was necessary as I intended to explore a more nuanced data within and across the incidents to aid in providing a comprehensive finding to the research questions. As Gustafsson (2017) shows evidence derived from multiple case studies is deemed strong and reliable. The two cases in Nigeria therefore provided the opportunity to evaluate different issues and therefore aided in understanding why women and girls are abducted in the country and what shaped the responses to the abductions. The study used primary and secondary data. Thematic analysis and desk analysis were used as the analytical tools.

3.3 Using Qualitative Methods in Research

This research utilizes a qualitative method through interviews with key officials, Journalists, and other resource persons together with secondary data from sources such as reports, media contents, and academic literature to enrich the data for an in-depth analysis. Whereas quantitative research focuses on numerical aspects, qualitative methods usually emphasize words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data. The use of sources like interviews, texts, and diverse media for discovery to give deep or rich data is prevalent in qualitative research. In other words, qualitative research aims to develop understanding, rather than to establish measurable, objective facts. Aspers and Corte (2019) note that qualitative researchers often investigate phenomena in their natural surroundings, seeking to make sense of or interpret events in terms of the meanings that people assign to them. Thus, it seeks to give a thorough knowledge of human behavior, emotion, attitudes, and experiences (Haradhan Kumar Mohajan, 2018). Qualitative research is a systematic and subjective approach to highlighting and explaining daily life events, as well as seeking to provide meaning to the social world through its people's examination and interpretation of the world. (Bryman, 2016; Haradhan Kumar Mohajan, 2018). However, although qualitative approaches have several positive qualities, qualitative research has also been criticized. This critique centers on the allegations that qualitative research is overly subjective, that it is difficult to reproduce the findings, and that generalizing the conclusions is difficult (Bryman, 2016, p.398-399). Even though qualitative research must deal with the issue of subjectivity and the resultant issues with generalization, replicability, and validity of findings, it also provides valuable data that add depth and richness to the research in ways that quantitative research cannot. Therefore, Aspers and Corte (2019) assert that qualitative methods are appropriate for an in-depth examination of cases to describe, analyze and understand key features. With this, a qualitative method was deemed appropriate for this study.

3.4 Data Collection

The study used both primary and secondary data. According to Rabianski (2003), primary data is information obtained directly from a source. Thus, primary data is directly corrected by the researcher. On the other hand, secondary data is where the researcher is not involved directly in the compilation of the data. For this study, the primary data were collected through a semi-structured interview with academics, Journalists, and officials in Nigeria, together with both Domestic Organizations and some International Organizations. The interviews were conducted via zoom. An interview guide (Appendix) was used to help ensure that an effective semi-structured interview is

conducted and ensure that question wording and experience are the same for all interviewees (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004). The secondary data was sourced from academic publications, video material, reports, and other information released by non-governmental organizations and the media, and some State institutions in Nigeria. Amnesty International, UNICEF, Women Consortium of Nigeria, BBC News, Channels Televisions, are among the sources used in this study. The use of primary and secondary data ensured that different dimensions of the phenomenon under study is captured and as such, the research questions answered extensively.

3.5 The Use of Primary and Secondary Sources

Secondary sources, especially literature reviews and understanding the main contributions to the discourse of the topics being researched, are essential in all research projects (Meth and Williams, 2012). In this research project, great care was taken to get an overview of the literature and acknowledge its scope. Due to the complexity of the concept of gender, mainly because it is a social construction, this thesis chose to use the binary gender categorization. It therefore explored a variety of articles relevant to fulfilling the research objective. Reports from a range of organizations such as amnesty international, UNICEF, and UNESCO, coupled with media contents, and academic literature, helped provide an in-depth basis for the interpretation. The primary data gathered through online interviews added richness to the data and analysis. With this, this research project made use of triangulation by combining secondary and primary sources. Triangulation is simply the use of more than one method or source of data in the study of social phenomena (Bryman, 2016). When dealing with abstract topics such as gender, triangulation might be advantageous. The phenomenon under investigation has a subjective element, and it is important to ensure that such subjectivity does not influence the findings and the interpretations. Combining both primary and secondary data helped ensure confirmability. Thus, it helped to ensure that the researcher's values do not overtly influence the work or that any theoretical inclination does not sway the conduct and findings of the work.

3.6 Data Analysis

According to Bryman (2016:11), data analysis is fundamentally about data reduction. Thus, it is concerned with reducing the large body of information that the researcher has gathered so that he /she can make sense of it. For this study, thematic analysis and desk analysis were used as the analytical tool. The thematic analysis was used for the primary data which were sourced through interviews. The use of thematic analysis meant that the data were examined to extract core themes

between and within transcripts through coding (Bryman, 2016:11). These themes were then grouped in accordance with how they can contribute to answering the research questions and it was upon these themes that the choice of the secondary data was made. Desk analysis approach was used in analyzing the secondary data. According to Juneja (2015), A desk analysis involves analyzing a body of data from existing sources. Thus, it identifies and summarizes previous research, reports, etc. to establish knowledge on the current phenomenon. In quoting views of respondents whom I interviewed; their names were not used but were rather given codes. Table 1 below gives an overview of respondents quoted.

Table 1: Respondent Cited

Respondents	Position	Location	Date
Respondent 1	Academic	Scotland	30 July 2021
Respondent 2	Journalist	Norway	15 August 2021
Respondent 3	Journalist	London	12 August 2021
Respondent 4	Head of Public Relation and Communication, International Organization 1	Nigeria	17 August 2021
Respondent 5	Director, National Organization	Nigeria	3 September 2021
Respondent 6	Security Personnel	Nigeria	20 August 2021
Respondent 7	Government Official	Nigeria	18 August 2021
Respondent 8	Country Director, International Organization 2	Nigeria	3 September 2021

3.7 Reliability

Reliability is fundamentally concerned with issues of consistency of measurement (Bryman, 2016:156). Surveys and structured interviews are considered to have the highest reliability since they involve a standardized list of questions and minimal interaction between the researcher and the respondent (Segal et al., 2010). However, the standardization of structured interviews comes at the expense of the flexibility and in-depth responses required to gain a thorough grasp of violent extremist operations relative to gender constructions and officials' responses, rendering structured interviews unsuitable for my purposes. A semi-structured interview was the method I employed in this study although its reliability is not as high as structured interviews. However, in semi-structured interviews, although there is a list of questions already planned, it still gives room to engage in relevant discussions which are not predetermined, and it as well allows interviewees a sort of

flexibility in terms of their responses. Flexibility in responses was key to me since I intended to explore more ideas and submissions on the questions than getting static responses. The reliability of the research also matters to how the data was used and interpreted. The sections on data collection and data analysis provide a detailed description of how the data for this study was reached and analyzed. Also, I have documented my interview questions, as well as codes used in reference to respondents to ensure their anonymity. To assure accuracy and reduce the possibility of misinterpretation, I also asked each respondent to evaluate their remarks as quoted in the thesis to ensure all direct quotations have been validated. Regarding the media content, it should be stressed that not all the information gathered from the media could be checked from multiple sources however, for those that were possible, multiple sources were checked to prove the veracity and authenticity of those information gathered.

3.8 Validity

Validity focuses on whether a measure of a concept measures the concept (Bryman, 2016:158). Thus, it is concerned with the meaningfulness of research components (Drost, 2011). Validity comes in different forms, but I shall only discuss construct validity. According to Drost, 2011:116), Construct Validity has to do with how well you translated or transformed a concept, idea or behavior into a functioning reality. When conducting research, the idea or phenomenon under study requires a precise description. The researcher must attribute specific qualities to the concept or phenomenon that allow it to be assessed. The process of assigning variables or attributes to a concept or phenomenon to make it understandable, and measurable is known as "operationalization." Thus, operationalization simply is turning abstract concepts into measurable observation. Construct validity might be regarded as strong if the operationalized variables cover all features of the relevant idea. For example, the concept of gender can be considered a good example of an abstract concept as it is socially constructed, and therefore may have different meanings and categorizations relative to culture or societal context. However, to make this concept measurable, the work focused on the binary categorization of males and females to understand the relationship between terror directed towards women and girls and officials' responses to terror. Also, the concept of official responses could be an abstract concept since the word 'official' could mean different things depending on the context being used, and the term 'responses' could also come in various forms. As such, the work operationalized this concept to mean verbal responses or policy actions taken by governments and international actors (Human rights organizations, political personalities, influential personalities

such as first ladies and some notable celebrities, and organizations for women and girls) in response to an event of terror.

3.9 Ethical Consideration and Positionality

The issue of ethics is essential in any research. It is worth stressing that this research is sensitive as the phenomenon under study involved issues such as violence. It delved into personal experience, as well as actions and inactions of authorities. As such, Respondents had the choice whether to participate or not. Again, identifiers such as names and professions were not used in the analysis to ensure anonymity. The study also used the views of the respondents in aggregate in a manner suitable for answering the research questions except when a statement was such important to the research that it is required to be quoted. The consent of the respondents was requested during the interview. Regarding the secondary data, codes were assigned to views directly quoted. Some of the views were also used in aggregate where applicable, all of which was meant to avoid the use of identifies to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. However, before the interview, the purpose of the study was made known to the participants to have their consent. Since the interviews generating the primary data were done online, it was not possible to have a written consent form although that is the common procedure. As such, verbal consent was sought. It is important to acknowledge that as a Ghanaian from the Akan Tribe, we believe that women are an essential component of every facet of life and not inferior to men. As such throughout ages, women from the tribe have served as rulers, members of villages and town councils, and participated in legislative and Judicial processes of their communities, led warfare, approves the nomination of a king, and among others. Thus, women are acknowledged as important as men. However, there are some instances such as parenting and household chores that are gendered. I, therefore, entered this research in the hope of developing an understanding of the essence of women as targets of terrorism and how this can make us understand the relationship between terror, gender, and official responses.

3.10 Limitation of the Study

The study is affected by a few limitations. The first is that the primary data was inadequate because most of the people contacted could not make themselves available to be interviewed, especially because the interview was online. Again, the work could not interview victims of abductions in Nigeria due to lack of accessibility which I believe would have been possible if I had travelled to Nigeria to collect the data. Due to the inadequacy of the primary data, the other option was to create a dataset from secondary sources based largely on media news reports, academic articles, and

publications, working papers and books. Secondly, important documents of the Nigerian government important for this work were not accessible online. I, therefore, focused on the ones readily available. The last limitation has to do with my limited experience with the concept and empirical analysis of gender. It should be expressed that although gender is not a dichotomous variable, without an operationalization of the concept, there is the risk of measurement errors. Given this, gender has been operationalized in this study to focus on women and girls.

CHAPTER FOUR: CASES, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Chapter Background

This section of the thesis has two components, the first concerns the cases, which is the material upon which the discussion will be built on. Thus, it presents relevant background information on abductions in Nigeria and specifically, the case of the Chibok and Zamfara abductions, which are the cases informing this work. The second component presents the analysis and discussion of the study findings with respect to the research questions. The analysis includes a considerable amount of secondary data due to a limited amount of primary data. The study explains and interprets the findings by placing them in the larger context of academic literatures on the issue.

4.2 CASES

4.2.1 Abductions in Nigeria – An Overview

Abductions are becoming more common in Nigeria. The abductions are either carried out for monetary or political purposes. Thus, actors behind abductions in Nigeria vary per motivations. As highlighted in the next section on the Chibok and Zamfara cases, while the drive behind abduction by Boko Haram is politically focused, that of Bandit groups are monetary or economically focused. Given that terror is a political action undertaken by terrorist to realize their political objective, incorporating the economic motivational aspect of terror in this study therefore broadens the scope of the analysis and highlights the fact that the dimension of terror transcends political motivation.

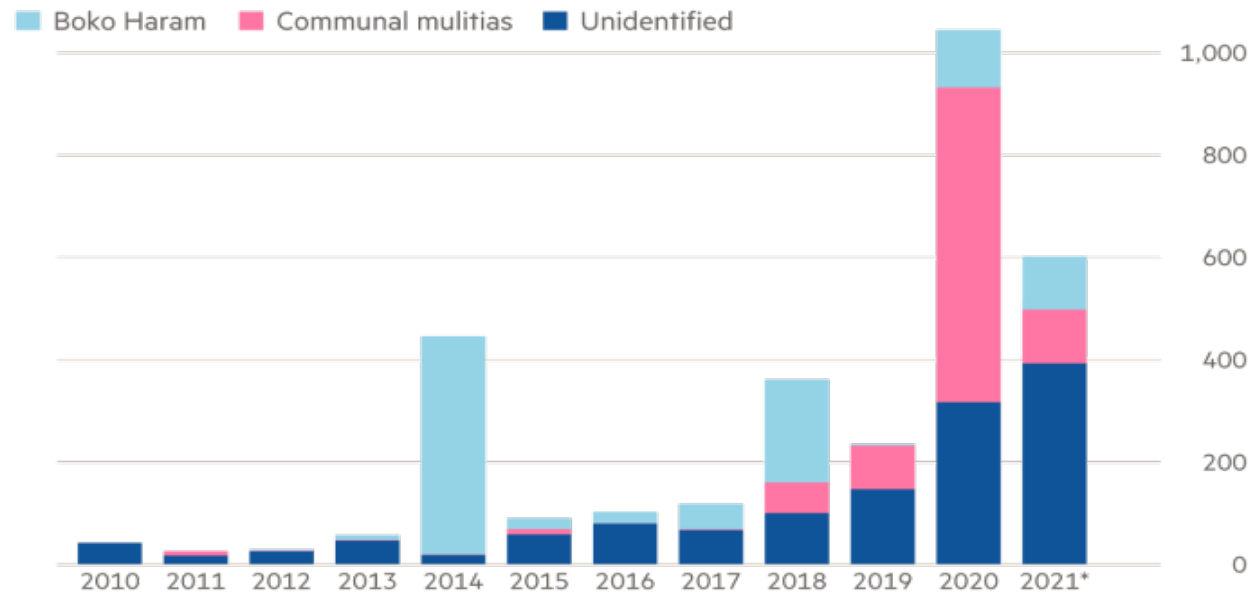
Originally, victims to abduction for ransom in Nigeria were migrant oil workers, but now many are locals, mostly working for multinational energy and oil service firms and not particularly the wealthy; anybody whose family may be willing to pay a ransom may be targeted (Ibrahim and Ibrahim Mukhtar (2017). According to Dodo (2010), four foreign oil workers employed on Shell Petroleum's fields were abducted by gunmen in Port Harcourt on January 11th, 2007, in what seemed to be the first recorded case of expatriate abduction. He found that the most notable aspect of this incident was the large sums of money received as ransom before the expatriates were freed. Dodo (2010) indicates that while the abduction of foreigners has stopped, the abduction of members of the Nigerian society continues to grow. He states that 512 people were abducted in 2009, out of which 30 died in the custody of their abductors. The causes of these incidents are manifold. However, Dodo (2010), Ibrahim and Ibrahim Mukhtar (2017), and Inyang and Abraham (2013) note that issues of unemployment, poverty, failing security forces, religious and political motive,

moral decadence and the quest to “get rich quick syndrome,” corruption, lack of stiffer punishment by the government, the influence of hard drugs, among others are some of the causative factors. *Figure 1* shows cases of abductions in Nigeria according to perpetrators from 2010 to 2021.

Figure 1: Abductions in Nigeria according to Perpetrators from 2010 to 2021

Communal militias are now responsible for most abductions in Nigeria

Number of reported abductions, by attributed kidnapper



*As of Feb 26
Sources: Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project; Zamfara state police. Data analysed and provided by José Luengo-Cabrera
© FT

Source: Munshi (2021)

Figure 1 above indicates that communal militias and unidentified gangs collectively called ‘Bandits’ in Nigeria dominate in abduction perpetration in Nigeria in comparison with Boko Haram, and they can be said to be perpetrating most of the recent cases. This could be because the act is lucrative relative to armed robbery (Inyang and Abraham, 2013). SBM Intelligence (2020) indicates that \$18 million was paid to kidnapers as ransom between June 2011 and the end of March 2020.

4.2.2 The Cases of School Abductions in Chibok and Zamfara, Nigeria

While acts of terrorism have targeted a variety of public spaces in Nigeria, schools have remained one of the most vulnerable spaces. The targeting of schools and students makes sense since the act of terror is ultimately to create fear. School abductions in Nigeria have been a major security concern for the government and security forces. Ojukwu and Chigozirim (2015) shows that between 2000 and 2015 there were more deaths and reports of missing pupils, teachers and other school personnel than there had been before the country's independence. As noted by Ojukwu and Chigozirim (2015), an example of the many cases is the attack on the Nigeria Air Force School in Kano on 18 December 2011, killing three Air Force staff injuring several students. In a separate incident in 2012, 15 school children were abducted while on their way to school in Aba, Abia State. The kidnappers demanded a ransom of twenty million Nigerian naira (Ojukwu and Chigozirim, 2015). Famous among the attacks on schools is the Chibok abduction in Borno State. On 14 April 2014, 276 girls aged 11–18 who were abducted from a school in Chibok, in Northeast Nigeria as they were about to sit their final year exam, out of which 57 escaped (Adeyanju, 2020). The radical Islamist group, Boko Haram, took responsibility for the attack. The act brought global attention to the menace of school attacks in Nigeria. Ranging from celebrities to Heads of States, all campaigned in different forms in calling for the release of the girls. Testimonies from some of the girls who were lucky enough to have escaped from the camp show how horrible their experience were. They recount harrowing tales of sexual molestation, gang rape, forced marriage, and other inhumane treatment (Wariboko, 2016). Considering the testimonies, one can only wonder what has become of the girls who are still under the grips of Boko Haram.

The perpetrators of the act, Boko Haram, also known as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (People Committed to the Prophet's Teachings for Propagation and Jihad), was founded in 2002 (Adeyanju, 2020; Zenn and Pearson, 2014). Boko Haram's main objective has been to create an extremist Islamic state in Nigeria centred on their version of Sharia law and the prohibition of western education, especially for females (Badmus, 2016; Zenn and Pearson, 2014). Citing Hill (2014), Adhlakun (2014) argues that the group's highly violent strategies aligns with a larger Islamist trend of international extremism known as al-Qaedaism. Al-Qaedaism refers to a set of political ideologies promoted by Al-Qaeda, a terrorist organization with different affiliations and networks whose agenda is centered on the violent removal of all foreign and secular influences in Muslim countries, which it sees as a corrupt deviation from Islamic ideals. (Bakker and Boer, 2007). As such, Adhlakun (2014) argues that Boko Haram is one of the geographic fronts where this

propagation of al-Qaeda is expressed. Adedokun (2014) further argues that the group's success can be attributed to support from radical Islamic sects in the north, as well as corruption within the Nigerian government.

Another perplexing abduction case is the recent attack in Zamfara State on 26 February 2021. More than 300 secondary school girls were kidnapped by armed men in Jangebe town, Zamfara State (BBC, 2021). The act was known to be carried out by criminal gangs other than Boko Haram. These criminal gangs are locally termed 'Bandits', a broad word for kidnappers, armed robbers, cattle rustlers, Fulani herdsmen, and other armed militias distinct from Boko Haram. It is noted that their activities are primarily driven by money (BBC, 2021). Bandits have largely attacked schools in the north-west region of Nigeria. Holding schoolchildren hostage for ransom by Bandits is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. Most often, they target children and people of wealthy families, especially because most people will be disposed to pay any offer to save their children, hence providing the groups with a steady source of income. As kidnapping becomes a dubious means of making money in Nigeria, particularly among unemployed youths, there has been an increase in bandit attacks on villages, and for that matter, fatalities.

Even though women are used for instrumental purposes by perpetrators of abductions (Boko Haram as well as Bandit groups), those by Bandits are more economically motivated than those by Boko Haram, whose agenda is political focused. As such focusing on these two streams ensure incorporating different facets of the issue of abduction in Nigeria and thereby aiding in the provision of a nuanced approach in understanding the rationale behind the abduction of women and girls in the country. Data were collected on both cases and was later then juxtaposed to draw out the themes viable to answering each research question. Using the two cases was meant not to only provide a comprehensive analysis to the research questions but to also provide insight into the differing motivations behind terror directed towards women and girls. Table 2 below shows the breakdown of the number of schools abduction of boys and girls in Nigeria from April 2014 to February 2021. It shows a total of at least 1500 students kidnapped within the year range.

Table 2: School abductions in Nigeria from April 2014 to February 2021

Date of Abduction	Boys	Girls
April 2014		276 abducted in Chibok, Bono State, North-Western Nigeria. 112 girls still missing
February 2018		110 girls taken in Dapchi, Yobe State in North-Eastern Nigeria. 1 girl still held.
December 2020	At least 300 boys abducted at Kankara, North-Western Katsina State. All freed.	
February 2021		279 girls abducted at Jangebe, North-Western Zamfara States. All freed.
February 2021	27 boys kidnapped in Kangara, North- Central Niger State	

Source: (Orjinmo, 2021)

4.3 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the analysis and discussion of the study findings. The discussion is structured based on the research questions.

4.3.1 How does gender affect the outlook and strategies of violent extremist groups in Nigeria?

According to research, terrorism is a gendered activity (Ndung'u & Shadung, 2017; OSCE, 2019). As such, understanding how the gender of women and men affects their experiences and roles in violent extremism is critical to developing successful preventative strategies. Therefore, this research question sought to understand how gender influences terror directed towards women and girls in Nigeria. The study observes that the role of gender and women and men's experiences in the face of violent extremism are influenced by a variety of factors. The study argues that gender influences the outlook and strategies and operations of violent extremist groups in Nigeria in socio-cultural, logical, and economic senses.

The socio-cultural gender norms of the Nigeria society tend to characterize women as political outsiders, thus, nonpolitical, harmless, and non-threatening (Jakana, 2021, Banks, 2019; Markovic, 2019; Nnam et al., 2018). The gender norms make it socially improper for a male to body search a woman, so women may-pass through guarded checkpoints or blend into crowds without arousing suspicion from security officials or ordinary residents. The general hesitancy, disinclination, and hesitation to search women and children mean that terrorist groups may use females to avoid security measures. Therefore, the terrorists exploit this notion concerning women by abducting them and radicalizing them to be used for the group's pursuits. Also, on the basis of the gender norms, male terrorists have on some occasions disguised themselves as women to get closer to targets or evade enemies. The operational benefits that females and femininity can offer extremist groups are not a coincidence. A 2016 report by New York Times highlighted a statement on Boko Haram by a minister as saying, "*Soldiers cannot open fire on every woman or girl who looks suspicious, he added, "They know we have the Achilles' heel"*". The statement affirms that when it comes to women and girls, enforcement of security is somehow compromised. This suggests that for women and girls, their status and value mostly defined by culture, societal norms, and gender stereotypes create an avenue for exploitation by extremist group. Terrorists in Nigeria are therefore riding on the socio-cultural fabric of the society for the realization of variety of goals.

Makama (2013) notes that Nigerian society is patriarchal, which is a key characteristic of most African traditional societies. Patriarchy is a series of social connections with a material foundation that allows males to rule over women. Makama argues that womanhood in the country is reduced to a simple infidel and a second-class citizen; hence, there is a widespread view that the best place for women is in the 'Kitchen'. This was also affirmed by respondents 4, 5 and 8, who shared the idea that the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society is ingrained enough that women are seen as not equal to men. This tendency has resulted in the massive misrepresentation of women from the home level down to the general society. This idea of women as housewives and wives whose sole goal should be to have children and care for their husbands has been fundamental to the operations of Boko Haram, as they claim that girls should not have western education. As such, women and girls are abducted to produce progenies for the group and forced to convert to Islam because of patriarchal attitudes about women as properties. This is more evident in the Northern area, where this culture prevails greatly at the expense of women and children (Nnam et al., 2018). Therefore, it can be argued that Boko Haram especially is utilizing the gender peculiarities of females and the conditions of the patriarchal social order for operational advantages.

The incorporation of women as victims of extremist operations is logical and an effective tactic. Extremist Organizations make strategic decisions on whether to use violence against women after assessing the costs and advantages. Several respondents (2, 5, 6 and 7) shared the view that most of the girls abducted were used as sex slaves, and they are also used to inhibit armed assault on the extremist groups, as states are obliged to minimize the impact of its military operations on the civilian population. In the literature review, it was revealed that women and girls are abducted for the purpose of achieving and boosting extremist groups cohesiveness by providing the women as rewards and fostering loyalty among the male members through the elevated status following marriage (Bloom and Matfess, 2014). Due to this scenario, in the context of female abductions by terrorist groups, forms of sexual and gender-based violence, such as rape and forced marriage, are often observed:

"My first husband among the insurgents was one of the people that abducted me. After having sex with me, he will send me out naked into the camp. Other insurgents will have sex with me. When I return, he will know exactly that his fellow insurgents have had sex with me, but he will flog me for wasting time, that was my daily life", recounts a victim of Boko Haram abduction (PBS NewsHour, March 21, 2018).

As the literature review highlighted, sexualized violence humiliates opponents or enemies, act as a means of reaffirming masculinity, and a portrayal of rage and dominance (Bloom and Matfess, 2014; Njoku and Akintayo, 2021). Therefore, violence against women by extremist organizations is an expression of control and serves as a conscious strategy for multiple purposes such as tormenting and humiliating opponents, terrifying people, and communities, reaffirming aggression and ruthlessness. Violence against women by extremist group is also a means of projecting authority. This can be seen from a response by Abubaker Shekau, the then Boko Haram leader, to the imprisonment of ten women connected to Boko Haram militants in 2012, when declaring to Nigerian authorities that, "*because you are now detaining our women, just wait and watch what will happen to your own women according to Shariah law, and to your own spouses*" (Zenn and Pearson, 2014). In communities where women and girls are seen as 'bearers of honor', violence against women can give impression of lack of protection and defense (Bloom and Matfess, 2014). In a patriarchal society, where men are strongly portrayed as protectors of women and their families, violence against women may mean a failure of responsibility and therefore disempowerment and humiliation. This can result in many gains for extremist organizations, such as getting large ransom payments or securing the release of their captured members through exchange of captives.

From an economic perspective, the vulnerabilities of women to abuses create sensitivity from society surrounding the kidnapping of women and girls (Adeyanju, 2020; Oluyemi-Kusa and Salihu, 2015). This sensitivity enhances pressure that exposes families and government to negotiate with extremist groups, which puts them in a better negotiating position (Adeyanju, 2020). As UNSC (2016) in its resolution 2331 acknowledges, "acts of sexual and gender-based violence, including when associated with human trafficking, are known to be part of the strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups, it is a terrorism tactic and an instrument to increase their finances and power through recruitment and the destruction of communities". On the definition of terror in the literature review, it became evident that that terror is a means to an end. During the Chibok abduction, there was widespread condemnation from Nigerians and the world community for the government's slow reaction. These actors urged the Nigerian government to do more to ensure the girls' release. This strengthened Boko Haram's negotiating power. Women have been utilized as bargaining chips by militants in dealing with the Nigerian government and the Nigerian community. For example, Boko Haram published a video in 2015 after an assault on the village of Bama in Borno State, in which abducted residents were paraded in front of the camera. Boko Haram commander Abubakar Shekau is shown in the video threatening that if Nigerian security forces do

not free his or her wives and children, they will not be released. In an interview by CBS Evening News in 2014, a 7-year-old member of the Boko Haram sect asserted that, *“if Allah wish, nothing will happen to the girls, but we ask government if they do not release our brothers, we are not going to release them”*. President Goodluck Jonathan authorized the release of women and children who had been imprisoned for their ties to Boko Haram just two weeks later. Boko Haram was forced to release its hostages as a result of the deal. Boko Haram has also offered to trade hostages for insurgents seized by the government. These events have also set precedents for criminal gangs popularly known as Bandits in Nigerian society to ride on for achieving their objectives. Respondents 3, 5 and 8, emphasized the economic importance of women to these bandit groups by stressing that, *“Girls are mostly targeted because they pay”*. A recent report by The Guardian News (2021) highlights some of the ordeals that families of victims to these groups have had to endure. A father of a victim lamented: *“My daughter is getting herself back now, she is strong and in her full senses, but to get her back, I have lost everything. I sold all my belongings. I sold our permanent house. A plot of land I had acquired, I had to sell for the release of my daughter, many relatives of the kidnapped are still desperately trying to find ransom funds”*. This gives a clear indication that extremist groups exploit the status and value of females to their advantage.

In sum, I agree with Oriola (2017) that extremist organizations draw on prevailing attitudes of socio-cultural practices regarding the social value, market value, and the desirability of women, especially in a patriarchal society. Thus, the gender construction, as affected by the socio-cultural fabric of Nigerian society, has generated a sense of worth for women and girls, making them a target of abduction by violent extremist organizations in the country. The foundation for this is that, first and foremost, because of the perceived vulnerability of women and girls to abuse, governments and communities are more prone to fulfilling the demands of violent extremist groups, making women and girls a vital economic tool for bargaining and wealth making. Secondly, females are also desirable to extremist organizations in Nigeria because they can marry them, and use them for the group’s sexual gratification, which can help in achieving group cohesion and loyalty. Moreover, there is a sense that female victims become a source of protection, as the state action is inhibited in carrying out an armed assault on the extremist groups due to the presence of abducted women and girls on their camps.

4.3.2 What factors shaped the national and international responses to the school abductions?

Before the abduction of the Chibok girls, Boko Haram had already kidnapped women. In May 2013, for example, the group released a video claiming it had kidnapped women and children in response to the arrest of its members' spouses and children. However, the kidnapping of the Chibok girls brought to light, and established a national and international awareness of, the group's brutality against women (Blanchard, 2014). Facilitated by the Twitter hashtag campaign, 'Bring back our girls', the reaction to this issue globally was swift, diverse and enormous. While the then-president Goodluck Jonathan was slow to respond to the incident and even raised questions as to whether the incident had happened, international and domestic criticism made him act and open to international collaboration and help. Influencers, actresses and other media and TV personalities took to social media in the campaign to bring back the girls. Internationally, the likes of Michelle Obama, Alicia Keys, and international organizations such as UNICEF and Amnesty International, joined the campaign to bring back the girls. At the state level, the United States deployed a multi-disciplinary intelligence team to Abuja to attempt to find and rescue the girls. Blanchard (2014) notes that the United Kingdom and France made experts and advisors available. France sponsored an international meeting in Paris on the Boko Haram menace, which was attended by regional leaders, including President Jonathan and delegates from the European Union, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The meeting aimed to increase regional and worldwide mobilization to aid in the release of the kidnapped schoolgirls, to fight Boko Haram and safeguard victims. Israel and China also offered assistance. The Chibok case demonstrates how high-level international attention may be a two-edged sword. On the one hand, international outrage compelled then-President Goodluck Jonathan to take action, albeit with little success. On the other hand, international attention increased the value of the Chibok girls to Boko Haram, perhaps delaying their release (Campbell, 2021).

One of the factors that shaped the national and international responses was that education was seen to be under threat. Boko Haram was already treading on the philosophy that western education is evil. Notwithstanding, there is high educational inequality in children's school attendance in Nigeria, which is geographic, socioeconomic, and gendered, acting against rural children, poor children, and females (Kazeem et al. 2010). Kazeem et al. (2010) note that the country's children's education gaps are greatest for Nigerian women and girls. A report by UNICEF in 2013 shows that the outlook is bleaker in the country's north, where net attendance is only 53%. Getting out-of-school children back into school is a huge issue. Gender, along with geography and poverty, plays

a significant role in the pattern of educational marginalization (Kazeem et al. 2010; UNICEF, 2013). Female primary net attendance rates in the northeast and northwest are 47.7 percent and 47.3 percent, respectively, implying that more than half of the girls are not in school. For example, in the northern state of Sokoto, the net enrolment percentage for females is 15 percent, compared to 59 percent for boys. Similarly, 48 percent of girls from the poorest 20 percent of households in Kaduna state have never attended school (Kazeem et al. 2010). Education deprivation in northern Nigeria is caused by a variety of reasons, including economic hurdles and socio-cultural norms and practices that prevent girls from attending formal education (UNICEF, 2013). However, the government has responded with a series of strategic initiatives to increase enrollment by addressing the issue of accessibility by increasing the number of schools within people's reach (UNESCO, 2010). Efforts are also being made to enhance retention and accomplishment by improving quality and decreasing inequities by focusing more on gender-sensitive and inclusive policies and implementing more effective education management systems. Other remedial actions include teacher development, making education more affordable, flexible programs for children from nomadic groups, lowering socio-cultural obstacles, and implementing social welfare measures (UNESCO, 2010). Influencing this fundamentalist extremist movement on school children, especially girls, is the socio-cultural context within which it is taking place. Respondent 1 asserted: *“The patriarchal ideas about women as preparing for marriage as opposed to going to school incentivize this undertaking”*. This was also affirmed by Respondent 4, and Respondent 5. The attack on the Chibok schoolgirls, especially because it was the first of a massive school abduction, gave an impression of eroding the gains that have been made to get girls into school, especially in a region with low attendance and literacy rate among women and girls. Some foreign officials also underscored this: *“Let us hold their families in our heart during this very difficult time and let us show just a fraction of the courage in fighting to give every girl the education that is her birthright”*, Foreign Official 2 expressed (Channels Television, May 10, 2014). Foreign official 1 also indicated: *“We should be clear that this is not a Nigerian issue, but it is a global issue. There are extreme Islamists around the world who are against education, who are against progress, against equality, and we will fight them and take them on wherever they are”* (Channels Television, May 7, 2014). An Amnesty International Report in 2013 indicates that at least 70 teachers and over 1000 school children have been killed or injured since the beginning of 2012. At least 50 schools have been destroyed or severely damaged, while over 60 more have been forced to close. Thousands of youngsters have been forced to leave classrooms in Yobe, Kaduna, Adamawa, and Borno State. Many teachers have been compelled to flee to other states for their safety. Over 1000 teachers have

been forced to flee northern communities since 2012, according to the Amnesty International report in 2013. The impact of attacks on schools is devastating to the extent of increasing the number of child marriages among young girls due to the closure of schools in the northern region. One 16-year-old schoolgirl told Amnesty International: *“Since many of my friends were kidnapped in school, my parents decided to give me out in marriage for my own safety”* (Amnesty International, 2021). This work, therefore, concurs with the assertion that, *“the Nigerian authorities risk a lost generation, due to their failure to provide safe schools for children in a region already devastated by Boko Haram atrocities”* (Respondent 8).

Furthermore, the gross violation of human rights through the act of abduction and the forced separation from families also influenced the responses. Abduction as a form of terrorism jeopardizes people's dignity and security, puts innocent lives in jeopardy, creates an atmosphere that destroys people's freedom from fear, endangers fundamental freedom, and violates human rights. Human rights are essential to the functioning of society. They assist people in leading more fulfilled lives, and as such, life loses its meaning and becomes gloomy when human rights are violated. The essence of human rights to people's well-being and the fact these were being violated through the violent act of abduction heightened concerns about abductions by extremist groups in Nigeria. Reacting to the Zamfara incident, the UNICEF representative in Nigeria remarked that *“this is a gross violation of children's right and horrific experience for children to go through, one which could have long-lasting effects on their mental health and wellbeing., we utterly condemn the attack and call on those responsible release the girls immediately.....”* (Hislop, 2021). Similarly, Foreign Official 4, also responding to the Zamfara incident, asserted that, *“I am appalled by the abduction of more than 300 girls during an attack on a secondary school in Nigeria today. Attacks on schools are a heinous violation of human rights. The girls must be released to their families immediately and unconditionally”* (Hislop, 2021). One can only imagine the agony of anxiety and depression, as well as the mental anguish of not knowing the fate of one's daughter in the hands of terrorists. The Co-convenor of the ‘bringbackourgirls’ movement in responding to the Chibok abduction highlighted how devastating it is to be uncertain about the fate of one's daughter in the hands of terrorists: *“I urge parents, especially anyone with a female child, to pause for a while to imagine how it will feel to have one's daughter abducted and held for who knows when. We will continue to fight until all abducted persons by Boko Haram are reunited with their parents”*(Okonji et al., 2021).

Moreover, the rise of the Islamic State (IS) coupled with the objective of Boko Haram spurred a considerable interest in the Chibok case by the international community, especially among western countries. After its split from al-Qaeda in 2013, IS reshaped the jihadist landscape. It declared a caliphate spanning most of Iraq and Syria, as well as a grip on a Libyan coastal strip; thousands of foreigners and dozens of groups joined; and it launched assaults in both the Muslim and Western world fighting on several fronts – against Iran's supporters, Sunni Arab governments, and the West (Crisisgroup, 2016). It had woven sectarian, revolutionary, and anti-imperialist jihadist thought (Crisisgroup, 2016). Boko Haram, the latest in a succession of revivalist groups rooted in northern Nigeria's marginalized political economy and systemic violence, had evolved from isolated sect to regional threat, giving the impression of steady expansionism of the Islamic State movement. Most world leaders especially from the West saw this event as becoming a global phenomenon where there would be a war on western ideals by the Islamic caliphate. Respondent 2 asserted: *“There is this Islamic element that in western culture, we did strongly react to because we have a tendency to see human rights and women's rights in conflict with this sort of extreme political Islam”*. Respondent 3 also indicated that, *“it was easy for the West especially to pick a side because there was no kind of justification that they could see for this, other than the spread of IS and a violation of human rights and women’s dignity. So, the global engagement from the west was sort of spurred by good humanistic western values as against “barbaric” extreme Islamic values”*. Boko Haram's goal has been to topple Nigeria's government and establish an Islamic state governed by Sharia law. With this already known, the attack added a new dimension to Boko Haram and its operations, which were increasingly being regarded by the international community not as an internal affair but a regional problem with global implications (Ecdpm, 2015).

Again, a gender element was inspiring to the responses to the school abductions. According to UNICEF (2017), children in Nigeria are vulnerable to a variety of abuses and harmful cultural practices. It notes that girls suffer more than males in Northern Nigeria in terms of educational deprivation, maltreatment, and harmful cultural practices. The country has the most child brides in Africa, with 23 million girls married as children in 2014 (UNICEF, 2017). Therefore, just the uptick surrounding the fact that a group of male terrorists took young females’ hostage did not look good at all in the eyes and minds of officials. When war and violence strike, girls and women are particularly vulnerable. Not because women are incapable of surviving or managing themselves, but because they are more likely to be abused and denied their rights because of their gender. On the section on the cases, as well as on the literature review, it was shown that realized that the

women and girls abducted were subjected to inhumane treatment such as rape, forced marriage, sexual slavery, among others. The vulnerability of women and abuses experienced by females during armed conflict therefore spur the motivation to put pressure on the government to do what it can in rescuing the girls. Amnesty International, for instance, in reacting to the Zamfara incident, expressed: *“The girls abducted are at serious risk of being harmed. Nigerian authorities must take all measures to return them to safety, along with all children currently under the custody of armed groups”*. On the Chibok case, a renewed journalist in Nigeria who participated in the demonstration for the release of the girls asserted: *“We are here today to lend our support in making sure that the girls are returned to their families. We also want to bring attention to women being at the centre of various conflicts, wars that are happening around the world. We don't think it's right (CNN, 4 May 2014) Some foreign officials also give substance to this point. For instance, foreign official 3 in his remark on the Chibok issue emphasized that, “... the actions of Boko Haram, and using girls as spoils of terrorism is disgusting, it is immoral, and it should show everybody that they should not give support to such a vile organization, and it is an example of why we have set-up the preventative sexual violence initiative ...” (Channels Television, May 6, 2014). It is therefore important to emphasize that the gender-based violence in its entirety and against women regardless of the context within which it takes place is an affront to many international standards and therefore spikes interest when it becomes overwhelming. CEDAW Committee (2017:6) shows that “there is no comprehensive national law on violence against women in Nigeria although various legal instruments have been put forth to address violence against women and seek justice for victims of gender-based violence in the country; these include the Violence against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPP), 2015, Gender-Based Violence (Prohibition) Law, 2007, the Child’s Right Law, 2003, Prevention Against Domestic Violence Law, 2007, National Gender Policy, 2014, Criminal Law of Lagos state, 2011, the NAP on UNSCR 1325 (2017-2020), CEDAW and the Maputo protocol”.* However, CEDAW Committee (2017) shows that these instruments and measures are poorly carried out or just stay as an initiative without ever being implemented. The failure of State authorities to respond effectively to incidents of violence against women not only violates the State's due diligence responsibilities but also impedes victims' access to remedies, including justice. It's invariably a sort of encouragement, or de facto approval, for these violent acts to continue unabated.

Here, it is helpful to consider if there were differences in the responses to the Chibok and Zamfara cases and, if so, what explains these differences? The Chibok abduction has become the central or

memorial event in the face of school abduction in Nigeria. This is because, as respondent 3 indicated, the kidnapping of the Chibok girls is recalled every time students are abducted from their schools by gunmen in northern Nigeria. Before the Chibok abduction, the incidents of abductions involving women and girls as well boys had already occurred, but they received little publicity. In the same vein, unlike the Chibok girls which attracted worldwide attention, subsequent abductions have received fewer reactions. According to Orjinmo (2021), there have been no street protests in Nigeria on subsequent abductions, nor have there been hashtags like #BringBackOurGirls, which attracted worldwide support and helped put pressure on President Jonathan to act. Notwithstanding, the government response to the spate of abductions and violent extremism in Nigeria has not been effective enough. However, unlike his predecessor, who was sluggish in acting on the Chibok girls, President Buhari's response to the Zamfara abduction was timely. He outrightly condemned the incident as “inhumane and totally unacceptable.” He expressed that, “*this administration will not succumb to blackmail by Bandits who target innocent school students in the expectations of huge ransom payments, our primary objective is to get the hostages safe, alive and unharmed.*” Be that as it may, although the Zamfara abduction had more girls abducted than the Chibok, its publicity, and the attention it received were very low compared to the Chibok incidence. What remains to be explained is why the Chibok abduction received so much more attention as compared to the Zamfara abduction.

Sources engaged indicated that the Chibok was the first of its kind in the country, meaning that it was the first attack where young schoolgirls were the victims. Notwithstanding, Human Rights Watch in 2013 observed that just a few weeks before the Chibok tragedy, Boko Haram had stormed a school in the northeast town of Burni Yadi, allowing female students to leave before killing 40 boys in their dormitories. The Burni Yadi event received little media attention until after the Chibok kidnappings, although this new information did not affect the direction of reporting of the Burni Yadi incident. As respondents 3, 5 and 7 highlighted, similar raids occurred before the well-publicized kidnapping of the Chibok girls, but they got little attention and never included girls. This scenario is puzzling and emphasizes how gender-based violence is more associated with females than males.

Moreover, the Zamfara abduction did not receive much attention because of fatigue created by the inundation of issues of abductions making it hard for people to regard this incident as important, especially since it happened within a wider spate of abductions. However, some Nigerians agitated

using the hashtag #ThingsMustChange employed by president Buhari while campaigning for office in 2015 (Orjinmo, 2021). In an interview with BBC News, the co-founder of the Bring Back Our Girls organization, said: “*Nigerians were exhausted from the frequency of mass abductions. There’s only a limit to what the heart can take, Nigerians went through a lot following the kidnap of the Chibok girls, people are just really tired, she asserted* (Orjinmo, 2021). With no significant results and positive signs from campaigns and government efforts that are sometimes criticized as not being enough, people were somehow less incentivized to want to extend a lot of energy to kidnapping cases when the state is still grappling to free some of the Chibok girls.

So, it can be inferred that, although the incidents of abduction of females had already happened before the 2014 Chibok girl’s incident, the wider attention to the Chibok abduction was because the victims were schoolgirls. One may argue that the Zamfara abduction was equally involving schoolgirls but did not get the hype as that the Chibok incident. But as shown, the series of events of abductions after the Chibok case without any major achievements from government efforts had demotivated people, especially in the country, to act as they did on Chibok incident. We can also factor in the ideational context within which these incidents occurred. Thus, ideas about who terrorists are and how much of a threat they constitute can impact how officials may interpret the seriousness of the incidence and the responses to that threat. This is to say that considering the fact that the perpetrators of the Zamfara incident were bandits with monetary purposes, their actions may have not been interpreted as posing a greater threat to the state and hence, the low attention it received. The distinctiveness of these two incidents as compared to the other female abductions in Nigeria lies in the fact that they have a high number of victims as well as the fact that the perpetrators behind the two cases are different suggesting why they were used as cases for this study.

In conclusion, this section finds that the national and international responses to the school abduction in Nigeria were influenced by the reasons that, first, education was seen as being under threat. Secondly, the gross violation of human rights and the forced separation from families through the act of abduction was unbearable. Thirdly, the rise of the Islamic State coupled with the objectives of Boko Haram gave the impression of steady expansionism of the Islamic State movement, and therefore seen as portending global implications. Again, the fact that young girls were taken by terrorists who are mostly men inspired the massive response in its efforts to bring the girls to safety. Thus, the gender of the victims and the perpetrators influenced the concerns that were generated.

4.3.3 What do the cases tell us about the links between constructions of gender, gender relations, terror directed towards women and girls, and official responses to terror?

Conflicts are likely to arise in a culture that assigns men and women different functions and values, thereby impacting their lives differently (Alsaba and Kapilashrami, 2016). During conflict, the gender structures in society are strengthened and reinforced. Gender and its construction define power relations in a society and decide what is expected, permitted, and valued in a man or a woman in a given setting. It, therefore, creates inequality and becomes a mechanism for the unequal distribution of social benefits, marginalization, abuses, and social justice. The victims of acts of terror, including hostage-taking, explosive assaults in public areas, among others, are women and men, girls, and boys.

This study notes that the abduction of women and girls by extremist groups in Nigeria does not happen in vacuum. The value of the gender identity of females to violent extremist groups in the country as result of the society's construction of gender underpins why they are targeted and abducted by the extremist groups. Both the Chibok and the Zamfara abductions give the indication that terrorist groups mainly target women to achieve financial, operational, and ideological gains. The cases have shown that the use of gender-based violence by the extremist groups is to terrorize the population into compliance for monetary gains, to achieve their ideological objectives, to achieve the acquittal of their members in captivity, and also to achieve group cohesion. The society's construction of femininity although gives room for marginalization and subjugation of women and girls, it equally gives woman and girls certain advantages which violent extremist groups see as essential for their prospect and upon which they capitalize. For example, the fact that some male terrorist disguise themselves as women, either in the form of being pregnant or not, to reach targets of suicide bombing, to escape security checks, among others, show how the construction of femininity is seen by extremist groups as a strategic tool for operational gains.

Moreover, as realized from the cases, strong emotions are generated in the face of abduction of girls in Nigeria. Given that terror is essentially a means to an end, the immense emotions associated with the abduction of girls due to the belief that women are more vulnerable to abuses gives extremist groups an advantage in terms of receiving a wider coverage and attention to promote their objectives. Thus, the subjugation of women by extremist groups is a mechanism to advancing their cause and the objective of the group.

It is worth stressing that essentially, whatever societal practices that deny women equal rights with males would also make women more vulnerable to physical, sexual, and other abuses (CEDAW Committee, 2017). For instance, Koelink (2019) argues that for ages, tradition, culture, and religion have determined men's and women's relationships in Nigeria, ensuring male dominance in all aspects of society. Jenyo (2018) also asserts that Nigerian society (both pre-modern and modern) is riddled with peculiar cultural practices that are potentially harmful to women's emancipation. Male dominance has been established in the structure of the country's social organizations and governance institutions. The socio-cultural fabric of the Nigerian society justifies women's marginalization in many spheres of the society, including education, the economy, politics, business, and domestic life. This unequal social and gender relation created by the society's socio-cultural order creates an avenue for exploitation, and abuse. It can therefore be argued that gender ideology of extremist groups is grounded on the prevailing socio-cultural ideas and practices of a society which shapes a sense of operational value, social value, and market value of women and girls in the society to extremist groups. It can also be contended that gender-based violence on women and girls' is tied to society's unequal distribution of power and the unequal relationships that exist between men and women.

Notwithstanding, aside from the fact that the construction of gender creates avenue for exploitation and abuses, it can equally inhibit the recognition of the importance of gender as a key element in crafting effective strategies to eliminate violence and achieve success in counterterrorism. This is on the basis that despite its experience with extremists, Nigeria's policy response to insurgency, the Terrorism Prevention Act passed in June 2011, was not gender sensitive (Botha, 2021). However, in 2013, when the act was amended, gender was emphasized by indicating in section 3.1 that, "a woman shall only be searched by a woman" (Counter-Terrorism Centre, 2013). As Botha (2021) notes, while this is encouraging development in that it makes provision for women to be accommodated within the security architecture, it is far from adequate in terms of addressing the wide spectrum of issues relative to women and extremism in the country. After the Chibok abduction in 2014, the country under the leadership of President Goodluck Jonathan promulgated its National Security Strategy (NSS). President Jonathan further outlined Nigeria's counterterrorism strategy in the National Counter-terrorism Strategy paper and referred to it as a "soft" approach to counterterrorism (NACTEST) (Botha, 2021). This 'soft strategy framework' was revised in 2015 under President Buhari. However, in none of these frameworks was there any obvious indication that specific steps had been or were to be taken to address the plight of women

and girls in the face of violent extremism in the country. President Buhari in 2019 revised the NSS, and the new version shows a reflection on gender and how that is important to security and peace. The 2019 NSS Policy document acknowledges that women are not just victims of war, and because of the many roles and agencies that they may assume relative to violent extremism, involving women in peace processes is essential in achieving sustainable peace and security across all segments of society. Likewise, the 2017 National Framework and National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (the P/CVE Action Plan) emphasizes gender:

Boko Haram's use of female suicide bombers is a worrisome development. Through kidnapping, forced marriages, and violence, Boko Haram continues to abuse women and girls. We are taking measures to free women and girls in captivity of parents' or husbands' authorities in forced marriages and captivity of kidnapping as have been done with some Chibok School Girls. We are also aware that there are instances when women have played the role of perpetrators and recruiters. In all circumstances, we are determined to protect the dignity of women and girls caught up in the web of terror. [.....] We will tap into this insight in designing effective prevention programs in order to achieve safety and livelihood for women and girls [....] (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2017, page 18).

This shows a clear recognition that extremist operations have had a negative impact on women and that they should be included in any counterterrorism strategy and peace talks towards addressing the insurgency. However, the 2017 National Framework and National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and the 2019 National Security Strategy (NSS) provide no direction on overcoming culturally ingrained structural disparities. Also, the initiatives are less sensitive to the girl children and, more generally, to women. But as Botha (2021) notes, acknowledging the impact on the girl children as well as women is critical, given that young girls have considerably less agency than women in their engagement with extremist organizations in Nigeria. Considering that the issue of abduction of women and girls were happening in Nigeria before the well-publicized Chibok abduction, and also the fact that it was in 2017 marking three years after the Chibok incident in 2014 that the terror-related problems of women and girls had its first significant appearance in Nigeria policy discourse on terrorism, is an indication that in terms of policy responses to terror, gender had remained an afterthought to the authorities of Nigeria until its necessity was highlighted by the Chibok abduction.

To sum up, it can be emphasized that the construction of gender and gender relations create a power relation in society and decide the status and value of a woman or man. This unequal social and gender relation conditioned by the socio-cultural context of a society creates an avenue for marginalization, exploitation, and abuse. In Nigeria, the socio-cultural norm of the society has conditioned a sense of operational value, social value, and market value of women and girls and, as such, making females fundamentally desirable to extremist groups as tools for gaining strategic advantages. For example, due to the notion of female vulnerabilities to abuses, strong emotions are generated when extremist groups abduct girls and women. As such, considering that the goal of terror is to create fear in the population for the realization of terrorist objectives, terror on females become essential to receiving wider coverage domestically and internationally for extremist pursuit. However, responses to terror, as has been shown, are influenced by many factors of which gender is one. This study argues that gender has not been a core determinant of the policy responses by the Nigerian authorities to the incidents of terror in the country. The exploitation of women and girls, especially by Boko Haram, existed, but the awareness was only heightened by the Chibok abduction in 2014 and appears to have remained an afterthought for Nigerian authorities. It was only in 2017, three years after Chibok abduction, that the terror-related problems of women and girls had its first significant appearance in Nigerian policy discourse on terrorism.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Using the Chibok and Zamfara abductions cases in Nigeria, this thesis set out to, first, understand the gendered causes and rationality behind the abduction of women and girls in Nigeria; secondly, to assess and understand the official responses to the abduction cases nationally and internationally and what shapes these responses; and, finally, to provide insights into the connection between gender relations and constructions of gender, terror directed towards women and girls, and the official responses in the cases and contexts studied.

As for the gendered causes and rationality behind the abduction of women and girls in Nigeria, the study notes that the gender construction and the gender relations of the Nigerian society are influenced by the society's gender norms which facilitate marginalization, exploitation, and abuse. The society's gender norms and gender constructions have created conditions worth preying on by extremists. The specific experience of women and girls in this current state of abductions is therefore heavily influenced by their social status before the outbreak of violent extremism in the country. The outlook of the perpetrators of violent extremism in Nigeria is formed in their socio-cultural context. Thus, the perpetrators of abductions in the country are riding on the socio-cultural fabric of the Nigerian society, which is a determinant of the value and status of women in the society. Due to the society's construction of gender and gender relations as influenced by the socio-cultural fabric of the society, women and girls have acquired a sense of value to extremist groups in the country, hence being targeted. First, this sense of value arises because the perceived vulnerabilities of women and girls to abuses make governments and society more likely to fulfill the demand of their abductors. Therefore, extremist groups see them as a better object of trading to have their captured members freed, and as a vital economic tool for wealth-making through ransom demand. Second, there is a use of females by terrorists as a source of achieving group cohesion and loyalty through the providence of marriage and sexual gratification. Moreover, they are also regarded as a source of protection, as state action in the form of an armed assault on the extremist group is inhibited due to the presence of abducted women and girls on extremist camps. Based on these, this thesis contends that the socio-cultural fabric of the society has promoted a sense of an operational value, social value, and market value for women and girls to extremist groups in Nigeria, which they are exploiting through the act of abductions for their respective advantages.

Regarding responses and what shaped them, this study shows that the national and international responses to the school abductions were influenced by the reasons that, first, education was seen as being under threat, especially by the fact that the northern part of Nigeria has the lowest rate of literacy and the lowest rate of girl-child education. Therefore, the attack was seen as eroding the gains already made in getting girls into school. Second, the gross violation of human rights and the forced separation from families through the act of abduction was unbearable, as such, heightening the concerns. A third factor has to do with the rise of the Islamic State coupled with the objectives of Boko Haram, which gave the impression of steady expansionism of the Islamic State movement and therefore seen as portending global implications. Lastly, the study finds that there was a gender element inspiring the various responses. This is to say that the fact that young girls were abducted by terrorists who are mostly men meant a lot to officials nationally and internationally and was of great concern, primarily because of women's vulnerability to abuses and denial of their rights by violent extremist groups.

On the connection between gender relations and constructions of gender, terror directed towards women and girls, and the official responses, the study demonstrates that the construction of gender and gender relations create a power relation in society and decide the status and value of women and men. These relations conditioned by the socio-cultural fabric of society provide an avenue for exploitation, marginalization, and abuse. In the case of Nigeria, the gender construction and the gender relations of the society are influenced by the society's socio-cultural norm. Although the gender construction and the gender relations of the society subordinate women, they also make them essential tools to be preyed on by extremist groups for strategic advantages, as shown above. This study further notes that aside from the fact that the construction of gender creates avenue for exploitation and abuses, it can equally inhibit the recognition of the importance of gender as a key element in crafting effective strategies to eliminate violence and achieve success in counterterrorism. This is on the basis that though abductions of women and girls were already happening before the Chibok incident, it took three years after the Chibok abduction before the centrality of women in the face of terror appeared in the country's approach to counter violent extremism. Suggesting that gender has been an afterthought for Nigerian authorities regarding policy responses to terror. It can be argued therefore that gender has not been a core determinant of the policy responses by the Nigerian authorities to the incidents of terror in the country.

However, the issue of school abductions in Nigeria may increase the number of Internally Displaced People (IDP) and induce a heinous violation of human rights. The exigency of the moment therefore demands that Nigeria adopt an all-encompassing framework for tackling gender-based violence while at the same time incorporating women and girls in security and peace approach processes. Thus, initiatives towards preventing the underlying causes of violent extremism in Nigeria must be gender-sensitive and include women in their development and implementation. Also, fostering societal transformation, and enacting comprehensive legislation towards the empowerment of women are key factors in challenging gender-based violence, including terror.

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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Section 1 (General)

1. Introduce yourself and present the research aim as well as ethics.
2. Get to know the respondent by enquiring about the respondents' occupation, education, position in the country, county/state (since Nigeria is a federal State), or community. Also, enquire about civic roles, or community roles or projects ever embarked on.
3. Start: there has been a recent string of attacks on students and learning institutions, what does this mean for Nigeria and the future of education in the country
4. Ask respondents what do you about know the perpetrators, and how do you understand their goals?
5. What has been the impact of the abductions on families, communities and the country at large.

Section 2: Case 1 (Chibok Abduction)

6. Ask respondent whether they are aware of the Chibok abduction
7. Enquire if they played any role or participated in the campaign towards the release of the girls.
8. Were there any responses from the county official, and/or national governments? Ask which county officials, or national officials responded.
9. Did any International body or officials of an international body, as well as International renowned personalities, responded to the event? Based on answer, enquire how they were.
10. Ask if the responses (by different actors) portrayed gender relations

Section 3: Case 2 (Zamfara Abduction)

11. Enquire about respondent's awareness of the case.
12. Ask about responses (State officials, National officials, international bodies and officials), to the issues. Ask if the responses (by different actors) portrayed gender relations

Section 4: General reflections

13. Use the kankara abduction involving Boys, and ask if respondent think the issue of abductions is gendered relative to the perpetrators and official responses? Based on answer, you can ask who among the genders is at risk today.
14. What gendered causes or rationality would you say account for why women and girls are mostly abducted?
15. Do you see Culture or the Socio-economic context of the Nigerian state affecting why women and girls are mostly abducted?
16. What effects will terror on school children have on the girl-child in Nigeria, and the Nigerian State at large if the events are left unchecked.
17. What can be done to mitigate the effect if not to totally address it.

Concluding Section

18. Let respondents know how grateful and appreciative you are to them and their time.
19. Ask respondents if they have any question, comment, or suggestion to you
20. Ask respondents if you may come to them later should you have more questions.



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