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## Boko Haram Activities and Membership Drive among Rural Farmers in Mubi North and South Local Government Areas of Adamawa State, Nigeria

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### Abstract:

*Despite the war against insurgencies in Nigeria, Boko Haram activities are on high record, membership expanding and total land coverage on suicide bombing increasing. Also, parents in the North east of Nigeria have started donating their female children for suicide bombing. Thus, this research explored the membership drill tactics adopted by Boko Haram and reason why parents willingly donate female children for suicide bombing. The study was guided by both Broken Windows and Strain theories. Snowballing was also used to select sample size of nine (9) for qualitative data. Data generated were analysed via open content analysis which took cognisance of the respondents' gesture. Results revealed that Boko Haram attracts compulsory members via presentation of loans to farmers. The victims (farmers) willingly donate their children for suicide bombing on automatic membership and on the threat of killing the entire family members. Thus, the study recommends that any micro-finance that would loan money to people must be registered under a recognized bank and payment should only be done through the affiliated bank to reduce vulnerability. Military surveillance should include anonymous patrol to give victims the courage to speak out on whatever demand placed on them by any dangerous group.*

**Keywords:** Boko Haram, Boko Haram activities, membership drive, rural farmers, parent, donating children, suicide bombing

### 1. Introduction

The current security challenges facing the country, Nigeria, has been alarming and worrisome. Central to these challenges is the fear of insecurity posed by Boko Haram, whose objective was to establish and maintain an Islamic State under the principles of Shari'ah throughout the country (Udounwa, 2013) before its ideological movement as demonstrated by the group under the leadership of a radicalist, Mohammed Yusuf. The existence of Boko Haram was traced to 1995 when it was first established as a micro diplomatic Salafiyyah Islamic movement, the Muslim Youth Organization under the Arabic name "Shabāb" (Oyewole, 2013) in Maiduguri, Borno State, North-Eastern Nigeria and under the leadership of Mallam Lawal (Chothia, 2012). Salafist was peace and peaceful driven with the aim of rendering assistance and giving lectures (Shuaibu & Salleh, 2015) to the Northern indigents. However, when leadership took turns and crawled under the command of a radicalist known as Mohammad Yusuf in 2002 (Chothia, 2012; Umar, 2012; Tonwe & Eke, 2013; Monguno & Umara, 2014; Shuaibu & Salleh, 2015), the group's existence turned sour and shifted its peaceful operations to brutality and violence. Thus, the name "Boko Haram" was given by the new radical leader (Oyewole, 2013). Boko Haram, under the radicalist leader, found comfort in waging war against Nigerians and the government (Walker, 2012), especially as it sought to address corruption, injustice, and inequality (Ostien, 2007; Casey, 2008; Umar, 2015). Since then, the attacks of the group have intensified in terms of strategic frequency and potency (Shuaibu & Salleh, 2015) resulting into loss of thousands of lives, destruction of property, grievous injuries and displacement of thousands of families (Wakili & Igidi, 2014). Mark (2014) reported that activities of Boko Haram such as the abduction of 276 Chibok School girls among others, have placed the group at the focal point of the universe, specifically when it was listed among the most dangerous terrorist organizations in the world (Simonelli, et al., 2015).

Furthermore, Robbins (2016) revealed a high percentage of youths in Boko Haram with an average age range of 27-28, especially at the time of involvement in the group. Boko Haram selects its members largely from abandoned youth, jobless undergraduates, university graduates, impoverished children (Onuoha, 2014) and freed prisoners (Steinberg & Weber, 2015; cited in Shuaibu & Salleh, 2015) mostly but not only from the Northern Nigeria but also partly from wealthy, educated and influential personages (Onuoha, 2014). Teenage boys are increasingly targeted as they are sent to teaching factions where they are either indoctrinated or killed upon refusal or hesitations. Thus, women and girls are also important instrument and tool in operations, especially suicide bombing attacks (Zenn, 2014) after they have been raped or forcibly married (Amnesty International Report, 2015). The kidnapped are used as slaves or in operations to carry out arson attacks, intelligence gathering, and to decoy targets into kill zones (Cleaves, 2015). Bintube (2015) exposed that the

bulk of the group's members were the poor with lower status, intruders and settlers whose parents were either dead or living.

The group also engages themselves in nomadic preaching to distort the youth's previous views of the religion and describe the government of Nigeria as a house of corruption that needs to be set ablaze. From there, youths are recruited and trained on activities ranging from running errands to suicide bombings. In fact, some of the young followers have been promoted to the level of the highest radicalism as they are willing to carry out suicide bombings with the defective belief of dying a martyr, an assurance of eternal dwelling in paradise in the afterlife and this was regarded by Onuoha (2014), as ignorance of the true teachings of Islamic religion.

Boko Haram uses both voluntary and compulsive recruitment strategies to recruit members (Pate et al., 2014; Zenn, 2014; Pate, 2015). Those that joined voluntarily are either motivated by ideological extreme beliefs or to seek revenge on the Nigerian militias as a result of previous persecution by them. While on coercion, the group conducts raid operations where the kidnapped recruits are compelled to fight or support them on the threat of death (Pate et al., 2014). Zenn (2014) also added that Boko Haram's recruitment profiles included forcible enlistments and financiers. Boko Haram included the presence of foreign fighters and purportedly invited recruits through financial incentives with major emphasis on the victimization of the Almajiris among other vulnerable individuals (Pate et al., 2014; Zenn, 2014; Pate, 2015).

Many scholars believed that poverty and other socio-economic factors like illiteracy in the Northern region of the country explains, to a large extent, the reasons why youths join Boko Haram. Poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, widespread corruption, bad leadership and weak family bonds, especially parental neglect as key factors in the group's recruitment process (Onuoha, 2014). Influence from social and business peers is another key factor as Robbins (2016) added, especially through motivations and empty promises. Liolio (2013) also attributed the successful recruitment strategy of the group to the level of poverty in the country and assumed the results to be similar in societies characterized by poverty, illiteracy, ineffectiveness, corruption, discrimination to modernization and globalization. Pate (2015) contended that poverty, illiteracy, immaturity, and unemployment makes the youths vulnerable to Boko Haram's recruitment just as Campbell (2013) listed monetary inducements, kinship persuasion/peer pressure, radicalization, inter-religious, and governmental violence as factors that attract youths to join Boko Haram. Olojo (2013) included economic deprivation as the chief factor that motivates the drives, and stimulates youths, towards violent extremism, recruitment and support for Boko Haram insurgency.

The CLEEN Foundation co-sponsored by United States Institute of Peace (USIP) carried out a survey in the Northern Nigeria to determine why the youths are vulnerable to recruitment. The survey reported three (3) major factors, poverty and unemployment, exploitation by extremist religious leaders, and a misunderstanding of the authentic teachings of Islam. Harper (2014) mentioned an endurance of economic deprivation and poverty and an increased maternal and infant mortality rates in the world. Bintube (2015) posited poverty, unemployment, corruption, deception, bad governance, injustice, governmental neglect, vengeance, parental disobedience and border porosity as the root causes of the group's insurgency as well as leading factors responsible for its growth and basis of recruitment. In fact, the present challenges that led to the further entrenchment of Boko Haram in Borno was the climax of a complete rotten societal disorganization, including family disruption, weak cultural value system, indiscipline (Bintube, 2015), weak governance system, presence of private militias and the large presence of Almajiris (Galtimari, 2011). To Blanchard (2011), high rates of poverty and unemployment resulting from the increased population growth and the level of illiteracy facing the Northern Nigeria coupled with weak governance, uncontrolled corruption, and inadequate supply of social services contributed to the widespread estrangement that might have facilitated the recruitment and selection process of Boko Haram.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

This research used both Broken Windows Theory (propounded by J. Q. Wilson and G. L. Kelling) and Strain Theory to explain the increasing operations of Boko Haram and membership motivation. This is because Broken Windows theory sees the increasing operations of Boko Haram resulting from the failure of the Nigerian government to end minor offences such as illegal immigration, preaching of extreme ideologies, ethno-religious conflicts, among others. By extension, it adopted Strain theory (proposed by Robert K. Merton), to supplement the explanation of the motivations of the Boko Haramists towards the achievement of goals using a bridge of anomie.

Broken Windows theory, just like Strain theory, is a criminological theory of the norm-setting and signaling effect of minor crimes and disorders on additional crimes and deviances. The theory states that effective maintenance and swift monitoring of societal phenomena to prevent small crimes helps create an atmosphere of order and lawfulness, thereby preventing more serious crimes from happening. Strain Theory added that the sources of criminal behaviours could be traced to the dysfunctional neighbourhood socio-cultural characteristics. The theory explained crimes as products of faulty social structures and demonstrated how the structures pressurize people into committing crimes.

Accordingly, once a neighbourhood breaks down, after being infested with bulks of minor crimes aggravating into serious crimes, it can, in a short period of time, become an unpleasant and horrifying dungeon like the present Boko Haram in Nigeria. In the long run, if there is absence of zero-tolerance policy and an ineffective faulty legal system resulting into frightening chaos and crimes, people will pursue their desires without regards to hurting others in the process. When individual desires are overridden by the compulsion to succeed and confronted simultaneously with weak legal restraints on a legitimate means of achievement, a gap between the societal established goals and institutional means of achieving the goals is created. This created gap, called Strain, takes place when a society socializes people into the values

of pursuing social goals, but fails to provide the means of achieving the goals. These people then devise various means of adaptation in response to their survival mission of volitions. In essence, five (5) dimensional categories of adaptation were presented by Merton to include Conformity, Innovation, Ritualism, Retreatism and Rebellion.

Of course, the existence of the Boko Haram is a manifestation of a broken window. The budding of some minor crimes regurgitating in multitudes, invited the horrific operations of the Boko Haram. When attention to historically acclaimed minor security issues, such as border porosity, illegal migration and trafficking, ill-preaching, communal conflicts, ethno-religious clashes, kidnapping etc., are either in absentia or infinitesimal, it is expected that the devastating consequences will be grave insecurity. However, it is most pertinent to mention here that Boko Haram falls within the category of Rebellion. These include persons who reject both the conventional goals and the institutionalized means. To this group of individuals, the legitimate goals and means of achievement are either in absentia, infinitesimal, or improper as to accommodate them in the leagues of conformists. And as a result, they devise another set of goals and means of achievement which to them is exact, sufficient, and proper contrary to the society's definition of legitimacy or conformity. Boko Haram devising a new recruitment strategy is enough signals to their resistance and fresh motivations, which could be a result of extreme/outlandish ideologies, political/strategic grievances or motives, disrupted psychology, criminal gains or hateful discriminations. The group's devised goals and means are apparently outside the society's level of legitimacy. Hence, Boko Haram terrorists are rebels and radicals.

### 3. Material and Methods

The research was an explorative research that used mainly qualitative methods for data generation. The research targeted victims of Boko Haram who were farmers in Mubi (North and South) Local Government Areas of Adamawa State. A snowball technique was used to select respondents for the study. Snowball was used because of the accidental identification of the first respondent who was a female victim that had a connection with one of the victims (connection with the victim's network). This led to the continuous identification of other respondents in the network as the first victim paved way for the identification of the second respondent who referenced the victim's network for required sample size identification. Precisely, nine (9) respondents were identified for the interview; both male and female who were husbands and wives and a widow who was the first female respondent to be identified from the network. That is, four families and a widow were identified.

The first respondent was able to identify other respondents after establishing confidence and believed that the researcher was not a member of Boko Haram. An in-depth interview (IDI) on one-on-one basis was conducted with only the first female respondent who was a widow. While the four families refused a one on one interview, the researcher resulted in Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with the families stratified into two groups of female and male (the wives) and the husbands respectively.

The respondents refused electronic recording of the interviews. The interviews were manually recorded and in some cases not recorded at all. This actually gave the researcher a stressful documentation and analysis, because the researcher had to flash back and deep-thinking before recording the response at the end of each data collection. The data collection periods were either very early in the morning or late in the evening to avoid calling the attention of the neighborhood where the research is took place.

#### Instruments for Data Collection

Two major instruments were used: interview schedule/checklist and focus group discussion guide. Both instruments were not taken along to the field. Rather, the researcher memorized the questions based on the objectives to be achieved and asked respondents questions off hands. Though, the questions were probed further.

### 4. Findings and Discussions

Most members of Boko Haram are rural farmers and most of them, as reported by the respondents, became members by ignorance. Once you are enlisted, de-membership is death. According to a female respondent:

I joined this deadly group without knowing that I was a member. Some groups of men came to my husband who is a farmer and told him that they were registered Microfinance Organization from Abuja who was giving loan to only farmers as part of the federal government's effort to improve agricultural productivity in Nigeria so as to reduce unemployment. My husband collected the money and the money he collected was what made the entire family bokoharam member (FGD/female/2017).

By implication, Boko Haram is targeting rural areas where people would be easy to convince because of their little or lack of western education. It was the lack of education that made the above respondent's husband not to question the authenticity of the loan in order to ascertain whether or not, the loan was from Federal Government of Nigeria. Also, Boko Haram sect is presenting herself to the ruralists as a Micro Finance Organisation (MFO) like LAPO which is popularly known in the North as a micro finance organisation that gives loan to individuals on membership basis without collateral.

Lack of awareness on the part of the Federal Government on the registered MFO also increases the vulnerability of the victims. The above information also shows that farmers are most likely to be members of Boko Haram and that is why despite the effort of the security agencies, their population is increasing with a wide coverage. North-east, with the inclusion of Adamawa, is predominantly rural and farmers, as well, supplies the nation with the most needed agricultural produce. By and large, Boko Haram activities can also be attributed to shortage of food supply in the country causing

increase in the prices of produce like beans because most of the farmers are now in the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, displaced and dependent on the government via Federal Emergency Management Authority (FEMA).

Furthermore, poverty is also a challenge in the Northern Nigeria which made it easier for the bokoharam sect to attract non-seizing membership. Poverty was what made the respondent's family to become a tool for Boko Haram. As Liolio (2013), attributed the successful recruitment strategy of the group to the level of poverty in the country and assumed the results to be similar in societies characterized by poverty, illiteracy, ineffectiveness, corruption and discrimination. Pate (2015) contended that poverty, illiteracy, immaturity, and unemployment makes youths vulnerable to Boko Haram's recruitment. Another male respondent reported:

I was in the farm when these people came to me that they were giving loan to rural farmers. I asked for the criteria for the loan. They replied that the criterion was just to take them to farmland as an evidence of farming. I took them to my farmland and my other pieces of land which I have not cultivated. After that, they issued me a form that required my name, my wife's name and the number and names of my children. In the form, there were columns for the passport of the numbers of children you claim to have and that of your wives (FGD/male/2017).

Obviously, Boko Haram presentation as a MFO was a deceit and a non-impressive method used to make people believe they are with Federal Government of Nigeria. Boko Haram does not collect anything as collateral, what is required is the assurance that the individual who is collecting the money is a farmer. Boko Haram also issues out registration forms to anticipated members for proper monitoring, membership identification, and strategic attacking. Once an individual's passport appears on the sect data base, then the victim is a member that must discharge duties whenever he is called upon. Failure to do that and the victim is tracked down based on the information earlier provided by the victim. The result also shows that forms are issued out for data recording and mapping of location against the residence of the victims. Meaning, Boko Haram's attacks are usually plan-mapping attacks. The respondent further reported:

I asked somebody to fill the form for me since I cannot read nor write and returned it back to them. After one week, I was given N500, 000. Barely after every two weeks, they came back to see what I have done on the pieces of lands I showed them with the money I collected. So, after exhausting the money completely, they came to me that they need my service, that, it was time for payback. I asked what kind of payback? They said they need my wife or any of my female children to carry a bomb to a designated area. I was shocked. They further warned me not to tell anybody because if I do, they will slaughter every member of my family. I was reminded not to forget that they have all the passports of my children including my wife. I was told it was better I sacrifice only one child for the lives of others. They started monitoring me, telling me my activities including about my son who was in the Qur'anic boarding school (Islamiyya) in Maiduguri, Borno State. That alone made me to surrender and believe they were everywhere around me. My wife was afraid and wanted to report to our district head, but I discouraged her by telling her that the lives of our children are in danger. So, that was how I gave them my daughter. I don't know if she carries bomb or she is still in their captive or even dead (FGD/male/2017).

As said earlier, most of the newly attracted members of the Boko Haram are illiterates who can neither write nor read and this made them more vulnerable. From the above response, Boko Haram gives as much as Five Hundred Thousand Naira (500,000) to farmers who are victims. However, the loan must only be spent on farm land which is seen as a requirement. Harvesting farm produce takes time and this makes refunding very difficult even though the loan was an automatic membership not to be refunded. After collecting money, membership is by threat. This further authenticates the findings of Zenn (2014) that Boko Haram's recruitment profiles included forcible enlistments and financial incentives with major emphasis on the victimization of the Almajiris among other vulnerable individuals (Pate, 2015).

Boko Haram also monitors victims after giving them money to make sure members do not expose the sect. It then demands a member of the family from any location for a suicide bombing depending on the location of the attack from the location of the victim. With these, it is obvious that Bokoharam members are recruited from the three Northeastern states (Borno, Yobe and Adamawa) where incidences of sect are mostly recorded.

In addition, the demand of a member of a family for a suicide bombing is on the threat that failure to donate a family member, mostly girl child, is the death to the entire family members. As a result, a family who is asked to donate a child may not have an alternative than to readily donate a child for suicide bombing for the survival of other family members. This result further reveals why parents were donating their children willingly for suicide bombings in the states of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe as reported by the Nigerian Army on 5<sup>th</sup>, August 2017. The statement was signed by the Director, Army Public Relation, Brigadier General Sani Usman that parents donate girls to Boko Haram for suicide bombings. Accordingly, Brigadier-General Sani Usman (cited in Omonobi & Erunke, 2017) reports that "many of the girls used for suicide who were arrested or who were lucky that the IEDs planted on their bodies fail to detonate, made the confession" that they were donated to Boko Haram by their parents.

Another male respondent reported further:

...when they came to me, I also took them to two of my farmer friends. We collected the forms and submitted the same day. They gave us the money the same day but went to the three of us differently to donate our children. The amazing thing was known of us

could open up to each other because of their threats, no one knows about the other person's situation. In fact, the three of us met as members of the sect. Because, the money we earlier collected was an automatic ticket for membership. Getting to know that we are members, yet, we couldn't expose them because of the lives of our families that were at risk not, not until Allah's intervention (FGD/male/2017).

From the response, loan collected by the farmers (victim) was what ensured their membership and a prerequisite for donating children for suicide bombing on demand. In addition to Campbell (2013)'s result that monetary inducements, kinship persuasion/peer pressure, radicalization, inter-religious, and governmental violence were factors that attract youth to join Boko Haram, this research identified threat, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and lack of grass root support for rural farmers by the government.

At the early stage of recruitment, members/victims do not know about each other's situation not until membership authentication. At that stage, a victim must donate his/her girl child to the sect as a wife, for suicide bombing on behalf of the family members or for whatever reason the demand is placed. Death as a penalty for de-membership is also what is ensuring membership solidarity and continuity of the group.

Furthermore, a female respondent reported that:

My son got missing not knowing my husband donated him to Boko Haram. We went to the village head, police station and the local vigilante to report the missing son. I got to know when the Nigerian Army revealed recently that parents have started donating their children for suicide bombing. That was when my husband told me the truth even though he said he was afraid of being killed by the Boko Haram (FGD/female/2017).

Victims do not reveal their situations to anybody including their wives because of the fear that the entire family might be harmed. Accordingly, a victim donated his daughter without even informing the wife because of the threat he received from the sect. Many victims got the nerves to speak out to their extended families and local vigilante when the Nigerian army announced the donation of children by their parents.

She further expressed her feelings that:

.....the Nigerian Army only got to know that parents have started donating their children without investigating to know why parent are doing that. I think this is where the Nigerian Army has failed. Do you think is easy for a parent to see their children dying and still kept mute about it? The Army should have investigated to know why such deadly and destructive decision by the parents. We have lost confidence in the Nigerian Army (FGD/female/2017).

Another respondent reported further on how the Nigerian Army got to know about parents donating their female children:

The Nigerian Army got to know about parents donating their children when they intercepted a girl on a suicide mission. She told the Army that her parent donated her for the mission. The Army only knows we are donating our children mostly female children, but careless to know why are parents doing that. I think this is where the military as failed (FGD/male/2017).

"How on earth would parents want to kill their children?" said the victims. The victims see the Nigerian Army as a failure and lost confidence in them because the Army could not investigate to understand the rationale for such decision by parents in order to come to their rescue.

Another female respondent whose husband was assassinated by Boko Haram narrated:

In my situation, my husband refused to donate one of our two children and he was found dead and nobody knows how he was killed. But I believed he was assassinated by the same Boko Haram that loan him money (IDI/female/2017).

This response further validates death for de-membership and refusal to donate children by the victims. As a result, many women have become widowed and many able men killed by the bokoharam sect leaving the Northeast Zone less attractive to socio-economic activities and standard education. Hence, what would be the faith of future generation in this zone? Standard education is inaccessible, farming not secured and guaranteed, then, the political stability and socioeconomic development of the country are going to be amputated in the nearest future.

Another respondent:

Youths in our community were given huge money without even asking for. They attracted young able men with money; money is majorly their membership drive. Many of our youths, male and female have left homes. The insurgents force them to sleep with each other and even forcefully take the female girls as their wives, producing unlawful children with lion hearth and this is why Boko Haram captures more female than the male. A very good example was the Chibok girls that were captured, what happened to the few that were rescued? They all came back with babies, they are now mothers. So you can see why the Boko Haram go for female captive (FGD/male/2017).

Lack of education, poverty and unemployment are the major factors increasing the vulnerability of youths in the region as reported above. This confirms the findings that Boko Haram selects its membership largely from abandoned youth, jobless undergraduates and university graduates, impoverished children (Onuoha, 2014) and freed prisoners (Steinberg & Weber, 2015; cited in Shuaibu & Salleh, 2015). Boko Haram go for youths and used money to attract them. Accordingly, Robbins (2016) revealed that a larger percentage Boko Haram sect constituted youths with an age bracket of 27-28. The sect also targeted young female adults to satisfy their sexual urge and this further revealed the youth female preference for captive

by Boko Haram. They forced the females into marriages and carrying unlawful babies as evidenced in the release of the few abducted 276 Chibok School girls. Zenn, (2014) also reported that women and girls are important instruments and tools in operations, especially suicide bombing attacks after they have been raped or forcibly married (Amnesty International Report, 2015).

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Empirically, little or lack of western education, unemployment, inappropriate exposure, poverty, ignorance and lack of awareness on the available credit facilities (government approved micro-finance organisations) were the major factors responsible for the vulnerability of the North east population to Boko Haram membership, particularly the ruralists. The sect is increasing in activities and membership commitment because of life threat on de-membership. To further protect the lives of other family members of the victims, victims donate their children particularly females for suicide bombing. To eliminate or reduce membership drive to Boko Haram, youth empowerment policies should be reviewed to accommodate higher percentage of rural farmers to ensure inclusive employment opportunities for all Nigerians, particularly people in the North east rural should be enlightened on the right credit decision to take and the available registered micro-finance organisations. All micro-financial institutions should also be affiliated to Commercial Banks through Central Bank of Nigeria and credit must only be granted via the affiliations to prevent illegal emergence of micro-finance organisations sponsoring and attracting terrorism for little financial incentives and to prevent shadow presentation of terrorist organisations as financial organisations. The existing Bank of Agriculture (BOA) should relax its requirements for easy accessibility to rural farmers, because inability of the rural farmers to access loan in the BOA was another vulnerable factor. Aside from accessibility, BOA should be made to operate from the rural areas if it cannot be located in the areas. Parents on whatever reason(s) should not concur to request of any individual, organisations or groups without the permission of the security agencies even on a threat to lives. All the security agencies in Nigeria particularly the Nigerian Army should try and improve on surveillance of lives and properties of the citizen and give swift response to emergencies so as to re-gain the confidence Nigerians have lost in them. Military surveillance should also include anonymous patrol to give victims the courage to speak out on whatever demand placed on them by any dangerous group.

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