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Sex trafficking and sex-for-food/money: terrorism and conflict-related sexual violence against men in the Lake Chad region

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ABSTRACT

In understanding conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), the notion of how sexuality and sex are naturally linked to power is gaining traction in IR discourses. There is, however, little contextual or empirical evidence that accounts for the various forms of CRSV against men, or how offenders exploit power dynamics in conflict and post-conflict settings to achieve their sexual desires. As a result, we rely on ethnographic accounts from survivors/victims, NGO workers, and security personnel on the front lines of the counter-terrorism campaign in the Lake Chad basin, particularly in North-eastern Nigeria. Long-term terrorist violence, we argue, creates material imbalances in men and boys and increases their vulnerabilities, providing platforms for individual perpetrators to exploit their vulnerable status or engage in sex-trafficking rings to satisfy their sexual urges. Therefore, this article adds conceptually and empirically to the nature and motivations of wartime sexual violence, as well as the gendered dynamics of armed conflict. It challenges the popular masculinist notion that men are immune to sex trafficking and sexual violence. The study emphasises the importance of effective IDP camp management and prosecution in preventing would-be offenders.

KEYWORDS

Boko Haram and Islamic State of West African Province; war-time sexual violence; sexed story; transactional sex; terrorism and counter-terrorism; critical security studies

Introduction

The long-running terrorist violence by Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP) has exacerbated economic challenges of the Lake Chad region. Notably, it resulted in a decline in farming, trading, fishing, and pastoralism, the region's primary sources of income. The Lake Chad Basin (LCB), which includes the borders of Cameroon, Chad, Niger Republic, and Nigeria, serves as a terrorist buffer zone and has suffered as a result of terrorism. The situation in the Lake Chad Basin is similar to that of any conflict zone where hunger and poverty are both intended and unintended

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consequences. Terrorist activities have resulted in high levels of unemployment, human displacement, agricultural system failures, food insecurity, and massive deprivation in the LCB, significantly worsening the livelihoods of the region's inhabitants. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, terrorist activities in the LCB displaced over 2.4 million people in 2017.¹ The terrorists' violence has had a serious impact on North-eastern Nigeria, which is located within the LCB region, the terrorist operational headquarters.

Furthermore, displaced people in IDP camps face a lack of material resources as a result of inadequately managed humanitarian interventions. There have been reports of material resources being diverted, thereby exacerbating poverty.² This has compelled women and girls to rely on themselves by engaging in transactional sex with government officials such as security agents and aid workers in exchange for money and other material resources at IDP camps.³ The economic vulnerability of women and girls has led to other forms of violence, such as sex trafficking. For example, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported in 2019 an increase in sexual exploitation or sex trafficking among women, girls, and children in North-eastern Nigeria as a result of a lack of essential resources in IDP camps.⁴

However, while scholarship and public attention have focused on the nature and causes of sexual violence against women and girls, scholarly debate and media representation on the nature and motivations of sexual violence against men and boys in conflict and post-conflict settings are emerging.⁵ Men and boys in conflict and post-conflict environments lose their sources of income, are forced to join armed groups, and are securitised, becoming key targets of state violence or repression.⁶ Men and boys are also victims of sexual violence.⁷ The debate on the forms and incentives of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) against men and boys has been marked by a strong focus on the weapon of war argument.⁸ To put it another way, armed groups frequently weaponised male sexual violence in order to undermine the masculinity of men in opposing groups through feminisation and homosexualisation. However, the emasculation of masculinity thesis has been criticised, not only because it evokes and reinforces gender stereotypes and prioritises heteronormativity, but also because it provides a simplistic explanation of a complex topic.⁹ As a result, there are arguments for the motivations of CRSV against men, as well as its gendered and sexual harms, to be understood on a continuum due to its complicated character. In theorising the determinants of male sexual violence victimisation in post-war societies, for example, Chris Dolan, Maria Eriksson Baaz, and Maria Stern asked, 'What makes SV (sexual violence) sexual? and According to whom?' They also stated that 'discussions on the "sexual" inherent in sexual violence are quite limited, particularly in regard to CRSV'.¹⁰ Scholars draw on survivors' interpretations or theorisations of their experiences to argue that, while the weapon of war argument has provided theoretical foundations into CRSV motivations, sexual pleasure is an integral aspect of the rationale for CRSV.¹¹ Hence, for CRSV, there is a convergence of impulses in which violence, power, and sexual satisfaction are all critical elements.¹²

Nonetheless, there is a scarcity of contextual and empirical evidence in the literature on the various manifestations of CRSV against men, as well as how individual perpetrators exploit the conflict environment and material imbalances to satisfy their sexual desires. We provide an argument that nuances the existing debate on the forms and

drivers of CRSV against men by drawing on ethnographic field accounts of CRSV survivors/victims, security agents, and aid workers in parts of the LCB. We argued, specifically, that terrorist activity has resulted in a decrease in agricultural activities, a significant source of income for the region's teeming male population, exacerbating poverty and fostering economic vulnerability among men and boys. As a result, perpetrators of sexual violence take advantage of their situation by luring them with promises of a better life in order to traffic them for sex domestically. Furthermore, just like women and girls, the material disparities make men and boys vulnerable to sexual predators who use their positions of power in the camps and surrounding communities to sexually exploit them in exchange for money or food.

This study adds to the expanding discourses of the sexed storey or sexual pleasure debate, which emphasises perpetrators' opportunistic intentions in seeking sexual fulfilment.¹³ It demonstrates how sexual desire influenced sex trafficking and sex for money or food in LCB. Thus, it broadens the dynamics, complexities, and range of explanations or forms of male sexual violence victimisation in conflict and post-conflict settings. In doing so, it challenges hegemonic masculinity clichés that frequently define men, particularly narratives that minimise male sexual victimisation, assuming that men are immune to rape or sex trafficking.

Nature and driver of conflict-related sexual violence of men

Although there are many intricacies to the forms and drivers of CRSV, one of the most important discussions on the issue in International Relations revolves around a binary explanatory framework, such as CRSV as strategic or opportunistic.¹⁴ Moreover, while much of the debate on CRSV has focused on women and girls, despite the fact that they have been disproportionately affected,¹⁵ men and boys have been victims of sexual violence in 25 of the armed conflicts that have occurred in recent years.¹⁶ Nonetheless, dominant explanations for the motivations of CRSV against men during this period have been fixated on the instrumentalist viewpoint, which theorises male sexual violence as a weapon of war.

Dolan, Bazz, Stern, Schulz, and Touquet challenge the weapon of war argument by asking how we can account for the 'sexual' in CRSV and who defines sexual violence. In doing so, they called for research that looks into this from both an empirical and contextual standpoint.¹⁷ Scholars such as Schulz and Touquet, as well as Dolan, Bazz, and Stern ascribe the drivers of CRSV against males to the biological inclinations of men who had been separated from their wives and had lived in the forest for many years owing to fighting, drawing on survivors' narratives about how they interpret and theorise CRSV.¹⁸ As a result of the predominantly homosocial environment, men assaulted or kidnapped their fellow male fighters to satisfy their sexual needs. Furthermore, Schulz and Touquet, as well as Dolan, Bazz, and Stern, argue that sexual violence is inextricably linked to power, violence, and dominance in rape cases. In other words, both strategy and sexual pleasure can motivate sexual violence.¹⁹ Thus, the works of these scholars provide the framework for future methodological designs and contextual investigations into CRSV by utilising survivors' theorisation of the drivers of CRSV.

Therefore, we build on previous research on CRSV against men by drawing on the narratives of CRSV survivors/victims, security agents, and aid workers in LCB, particularly North-east Nigeria. We contend that the terrorist activity in LCB has resulted in material

disparities as well as the vulnerability of men and boys similar to the experiences of women and girls. Hence, sexual assault abusers exploit their situation by luring them with false promises of better living conditions in order to traffic them domestically for sex. Similarly, material inequalities make men and boys vulnerable to sexual predators who use their positions of power within IDP camps and communities to sexually exploit them in exchange for food or money. Using sexual pleasure as an explanatory variable for CRSV against men, this study examines how the desire for sexual satisfaction influences sex trafficking, sex for money, or food in the Lake Chad region. Thus, it broadens our understanding of the dynamics, complexities, and breadth of causes and forms of sexual violence against men and boys during and after conflict. Our research also contributes to contesting the dominant masculinity stereotypes, which frequently portray men as invulnerable to sexual violence and thus minimise men's and boys' sexual experiences or victimisation.

Contextual background: terrorism, poverty sexual violence in the Lake Chad region

Violent and conflict-ridden environments frequently have consequences, particularly for the people who live in the area where they occur. People's lives are significantly impacted by the socio-political and economic conditions of their environments. The foregoing reflects individuals' conditions in the LCB in general, and specifically in the north-eastern part of Nigeria as a result of the region's protracted terrorist violence. Because the region is primarily dependent on small-scale/subsistence agriculture, the violence has exacerbated precarious livelihoods. Furthermore, the crisis resulted in a decrease in the availability and provision of essential social services. Hence, services such as health and education have been largely unavailable to the people. The majority of these social amenities have been destroyed, and some infrastructures have been rendered incapable of meeting people's needs.

The conflict has had a knock-on effect on all sectors of the LCB. According to a UNODC report, as of September 2020, the conflict had over 5.2 million people facing food insecurity, 500,000 children at risk of malnutrition, and over 1,100 educational institutions closed due to insecurity.²⁰ In a separate report, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs highlights the precarious conditions caused by terrorism in the LCB, where the humanitarian situation is estimated to have affected over nine million people.²¹ North-eastern Nigeria, one of the areas most affected by the conflict within the LCB, accounts for approximately seven million of the nine million displaced people in the LCB. According to a 2016 UNDP report, '45 per cent of all health facilities (including hospitals) have been destroyed; school infrastructure destruction has left 2.9 million children without access to education; and an estimated 75 per cent of all water and sanitation infrastructure have been destroyed'.²² The significant breakdown of these vital social services is felt in the economic viability and sustainability of the north-eastern states. Under these economic and social service collapses, the LCB and the North-eastern region specifically are said to be experiencing a massive level of food insecurity and its attendant consequences.²³ According to the report, approximately 5.1 million people were on the verge of experiencing food insecurity.²⁴ The loss of sources of income made these women and girls in LCB more vulnerable to engaging in transactional sex in order to survive in the hostile environment.²⁵

Trafficking in all its forms is an outgrowth of the humanitarian crisis highlighted above in the LCB and North-eastern region of Nigeria. The exploitative drive of trafficking is aided significantly by the vulnerability and desperation of victims of precarious circumstances. According to a UNICEF report, ‘traffickers capitalise on loss and destruction to exploit their victims, navigating the blurred line between consent and desperation as crisis-affected families and individuals fight for survival’.²⁶ Thus, the conditions that make people vulnerable to trafficking vary greatly. Furthermore, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the conflict situation in the LCB and its attendant consequences, such as market disruption and the severing of credit lines, has left a significant humanitarian deficit, particularly among women, compelling them to sell/trade sex as a coping and survival mechanism.²⁷ The UN High Commissioner on Refugees reported the rise in sex trafficking of women and girls. It was stated that the lack of access to firewood and water for cooking foods was a crucial factor that facilitated women’s exploitation, mainly single women in the IDP camps.²⁸ However, it is argued that while sexual violence against women and girls has garnered attention on various platforms, sex trafficking and other forms of sexual violence against men and boys in the North-east are less deliberated. For instance, a study participant revealed that:

The people that are prone to be more vulnerable are the men and so also the children. One of the major areas is poverty and shallow knowledge as regard terrorism. So this terrorist comes in, induced them with money, takes them out, indoctrinates with terrorists’ ideology, and gives them weaponry. While they are involved in acts of terrorism, they leave their children and women to cater for themselves. Sometimes men are forced to join terrorist groups, not because of their poverty level but are forced (via threats) by Boko Haram and ISWAP to join them.²⁹

In the subsequent sections, we examine how material imbalances in the North-east led to the sex trafficking and sexual violence against men and boy, thereby forcing them to engage in transactional sex as a survival or coping mechanism. It is critical to note that this study does not claim that there were no material imbalance and sexual violence of men and boys before Boko Haram’s violent campaign Nigeria and the Lake Chad region since 2009. It does, however, argue that the region’s insecurity as a result of terrorism and counter-terrorism operations has resulted in an increase in sexual violence by terrorists against women, girls, men, and boys in Lake Chad,³⁰ dubbed the ‘rape epidemic’ by Amnesty International.³¹ Furthermore, in the case of sexual victimisation of men and boys, during our interviews with staff of a non-governmental organisation (Sexual Assault Referral Centre) tasked with assisting the prosecution of sexual predators in north-eastern Nigeria, they stated that they receive between 30 and 20 cases of CRSV of men and boys every month, although it differs, but they do not receive less than 20 victims in a month.³²

Methods

Qualitative research design was utilised in obtaining and analysing data for this study. Primary and secondary sources of data were used. The purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the studied sites. This led to the selection of four cities: Borno, Adamawa, Lagos, and the Federal Capital Territory. The justifications for selecting

these locations vary. First, Lagos and Federal Capital Territory were selected on the basis that they house most of the NGOs focusing on gender and sexual-based violence as well as health services. Second, the headquarters of the security agencies are in Abuja. Third, Adamawa and Borno states are selected because they are located in the north-eastern region of the country, the hotbed of terrorism and violent extremism in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the identification and the selection of the participants were carried out using the purposive sampling technique. The participants were survivors/victims, NGO workers focusing on gender-based violence, and security agents who had served or are serving in the North-east. The justification for using the purposive sampling technique to select some of the participants varies. For the victims, their experience of sexual violence provided a valid rationale for inclusion in the study. The NGO workers were selected because of their humanitarian and advocacy activities in mitigating the effects of terrorism. Also, the selection of security agents was based on their engagement in counter-terrorism operations in North-eastern Nigeria and LCB. Getting the views of NGO workers and security agents that are described as critical stakeholders is crucial due to their knowledge, intervention, or participation in issues relating to sexual violence against men. This is vital to receiving nuanced understanding and explanations on CRSV. The participants' distribution showed four victims, four NGOs workers, one government officials, and three security agents. The above was drawn from the dataset of 31 participants of a study on sexual violence against men in the north-eastern part of Nigeria.

Because the study entails human research subjects, a review from an Institutional Review Board (IRB) became imperative. Hence, the authors sought and received ethical approval from the National Health Research Ethics Committee, Department of Health Planning, Research and Statistics, and Federal Ministry of Health, Abuja, Nigeria. Secondary data was obtained from grey literature. These include current debates of male CRSV, reports from international organisations such as Amnesty International and other local NGOs. Similarly, data were sourced from the local media on CRSV-related reports and issues.

Interview procedure

This section gives details on the process of the interview. Following our IRB approval from the Nigerian Ministry of Health, the authors reached out to survivors and victims of sexual violence through gender and sexual violence-based NGOs with operational reach in the North-east. Upon the expression of participation of interest in the research, survivors and families were moved from their various locations to a secure location in their respective state capitals- Maiduguri and Yola. It was at this secure location (hotels) that the interviews were conducted. Due to the extreme sensitivity of the issue, conducting the interviews in hotels was necessary in order not to raise any iota of suspicion. The researchers went through this process in order to ensure anonymity and participants' safety.

Each of the interviews was between 5 and 65 minutes. The interviews were conducted in the Hausa language and an audio recording was done upon confirmation from the participants. The researchers employed four professional language

interpreters and transcribers to transcribe the interviews into the English language. For the sake of clarity and ease of reading, some of the participants' statements were reworded. The researchers ensured the use of pseudonyms throughout the article in order to protect the participants' identities, which is in accordance with the ethical procedures of research.

The interview guide covered a wide array of issues and questions for the various categories of participants. Firstly, the survivors were asked about their experiences in the Boko Haram captivity and with the Nigeria security agencies. Respondents who mentioned sexual violence made us probe further into the perpetrators' identity and to ask if survivors shared their rape experience with any other person. In situations where the researchers got negative responses, the participants were asked why they refused to share the experiences with other people. Furthermore, the researchers asked the victims what they think about the perpetrators' motives. The researchers went ahead to ask questions regarding the physical, social, and psychological impact of their experiences. This led to delving into the government responses and their feeling about it. Secondly, NGOs were asked about the motivations for CRSV against men and boys, their advocacy efforts, humanitarian services, and support they have provided so far. This was closely followed by questions on how they made sense of sexual violence against men in conflict and peacetime. In addition, researchers asked about the extent of reportage of male CRSV and the perpetrators. Explicitly, issues concerning the physical and psychological effect of male-to-male sexual violence and how it has affected the victims' capacity to voice out or report were raised. Relatedly, the researchers asked about the nature of government responses to male CRSV. Security agents constituted the third category of participants in the study. This category was asked questions regarding their views about masculinity and CRSV against men, how they made sense of male sexual violence, reporting cases of sexual violence, institutional responses of male sexual violence, and the impact of male sexual violence on victims.

We were cautious of the psychological trauma that the victims/ survivors' stories might cause. Hence, we ensured that psycho-social support was provided for these victims. Accordingly, this support was provided by some of the NGOs in-house psycho-social therapists. The therapists were made available so as to provide the required counselling in case of any exigency. Nevertheless, two participants experienced psychological and emotional distress during the interviews, requiring that they be stopped. Interviews with these two persons were conducted at a later date when they expressed their willingness to participate, and the researchers ensured that the therapist provided additional psycho-social counselling to these survivors following the interview.

Data analysis

Dolan, Schulz & Touquet and Dolan et al.'s victim-centred approach was adopted in analysing the data.³³ The approach entails integrating survivors' discursive accounts, or how they interpreted and theorised their CRSV experiences, as explanatory variables on the nature of CRSV, or the numerous ways individual perpetrators exploit sex-trafficking schemes, or the financial vulnerability of men and boys in IDP camps and communities to achieve their sexual gratification. Furthermore, the interview transcripts were

thematically coded around the subject of how conflicts lead to poverty, making men and boys vulnerable to being domestically trafficked for sex and sexually abused through enticement for food and money. The study's findings were triangulated with secondary data sources on the rise of sexual violence victimisation of men and boys in the terrorism-affected Lake Chad region, including the case of North-eastern Nigeria.

'The took us to an unknown location and raped us for months': domestic sex trafficking

The United Nations (UN) Palermo Protocol defined trafficking thus:

Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.³⁴

Jespersion developed typologies of various elements of trafficking. These include 'migration away from conflict/political violence, sex trafficking into conflict, trafficking from refugee/IDP camps, kidnapping to sell, kidnapping for forced labour/combat, kidnapping for sexual slavery, forced underage marriage'.³⁵ Jespersen further noted that perpetrators range from trafficking networks or gang, armed groups, soldiers, families, and UN missions.³⁶ Importantly, almost all of these elements of trafficking always lead to sexual exploitation or violence.

Sex trafficking is nested within sexual violence. In other words, sexual violence is both a cause and a feature of sex trafficking. The above captures the experiences in the North-east. Explicitly, terrorism facilitated material imbalances coupled with the mismanagement of resources in the various IDP camps, thus leaving men and young boys vulnerable. Participants who identified themselves as victims of male sexual violence recounted that wealthy men worked with security agents in the camps to take them to various locations from the IDPs so as to make them sex slaves for months, and afterwards returned them to the camp. Below are the statements by the survivors/victims:

Some men came to the camps in exotic cars, and they deceived us by promising free educations. We were excited, as we all wanted to learn; hence we fell into their ploy. They took us to an unknown location and sexually violated us for three months and returned afterwards. We were offered money. Many accepted and decided to keep quiet about the incidents.³⁷

Some wealthy men, whom I believe were civil servants or business tycoons, came into the IDP camp in an exotic car. They called for me and promised they were going to provide for my needs. I was not suspicious of them because I saw them talking with the security operatives, including the CJTF, at the camp's gate. I was excited by their promise, and I followed them. They took me to an undisclosed house, drugged, and raped me. After that they returned to the camp with a promise of some money. However, to date, I have not seen them.³⁸

Moreover, an NGO worker corroborated victims' account of being trafficked for sex to wealthy men within the north-eastern region: 'Older and wealthy homosexual men introduce same-sex to young boys and then entice them to keep them on it'.³⁹

The above quotes reflect that the IDP camps' socio-economic conditions in the North-east are nested in the rising prevalence of domestic sex-trafficking and sexual violence. Survivors expressed their desires to leave the poor economic conditions in the camps for where they can access the necessities of life. 'They promised they were going to provide my needs, and I was excited'. 'They promised us free education. We all want to learn, thereby falling into their traps'. Perpetrators of sexual violence are aware of the shortage of resources within the camps and these young men and boys' ambition to escape from their sufferings. Thus, they took advantage of their ambitions, lured them with false promises, and subsequently violated them sexually. Security agents' complicity is yet another dimension to the young boys' experiences, as the boys trusted these men because of their affinity with these security agents. 'I saw them talking to the security operatives including the civilian joint task force at the gate'. The survivors and other participants' narratives underscore how camp officials mismanaged and diverted material resources. This contributed to turning the IDP camps in the North-east into sex camps, where some security agents, including some civilian Joint Task Force members, are pimping young boys to sexual predators in surrounding communities in the North-east. Hence, the argument is consistent with Jespersen typologies of sex trafficking carried out by a trafficking network in refugee or IDPs.⁴⁰ In this typology, victims/survivors desperate to leave the camps are lured with false offers and subsequently sexually exploited in secure locations such as brothels.

The linkage between poverty and domestic sex trafficking in the North-east is consistent with Andrews and Kapstein's assertion that poor economic conditions are a serious driver of sex trafficking.⁴¹ Moreover, poverty attracts trafficking network or gangs who exploit individual's economic vulnerability to lure them into sex trafficking with false promises of money or better life.⁴² Material imbalance drives people to migrate through risky means which further expose them to sex trafficking and other forms of sexual violence.⁴³

Importantly, the pursuit for sexual pleasure is rooted in sex trafficking. The perpetrators' 'utopia' exists in conflict and post-conflict circumstances where socio-legal restraints are less visible. Put differently, in order to satisfy their sexual desires, perpetrators seek out and use a sex trafficking network, or they develop one inside the IDP camps and surrounding villages. Therefore, similar to Schulz and Touquet and others who argue for the integration of sexuality, sex, and power in understanding CRSV against men,⁴⁴ we conclude that a conflict-ridden environment, a breakdown of law and order, material imbalances, and the vulnerabilities it creates empower sexual violence perpetrators. Hence, the cases of North-eastern Nigeria in the LCB, provide contextual and empirical evidence for Schulz and Touquet' assertion on how sexuality, sex, and power are intrinsically related in explaining CRSV against men and boys.⁴⁵

'You must have sex with me in order for me to give you food': sex -for-food /money and sexual violence

According to Jasmine-Kim Westendorf and Louise Searle, poverty and insecurity together with their norms are reinforced during conflict periods. This situation leads to the destruction of the means of survival and livelihood.⁴⁶ Hence, the affected people are made to live with the disbanding of social, familial, and economic structures. Conflicts stifle whatever little regular economic activity exists in the environment, thus further proliferating the people's suffering.⁴⁷ Moreover, poverty's underlying structural conditions bring about an environment that justifies transactional sex economies in society.⁴⁸ Similarly, Sarah Spencer stated that 'in times of conflict, when resources are scarce, women and girls often use the last resource available to secure protection and assistance for themselves and their families: their bodies'.⁴⁹

NGO workers and security agents also reported that due to the inadequate provision of foods and other necessities at the IDP camps and surrounding communities, many of the older boys engage in sex with older or wealthy people to survive their harsh economic conditions. Also, parents of children, including boys, give out their children to these sexual predators to get food or money in return. When an NGO worker was asked if young boys engage in sex for food and money in the North-east, he replied thus: 'Yes. That happens a lot, especially in the conflict areas. So I know that due to the hunger in the communities, the boys engaged in sexual intercourse with men in order to be given food'.⁵⁰ Similarly, a government official stated that 'the insurgency in the North-east, especially in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe has made people to engage in certain unusual sexual practices to survive. Some of the victims go to any length to get what to eat. So when we talk about issues of rape, gay or lesbianism, it is because of the lack of material resources'.⁵¹ Moreover, a police officer traced the problem to fathers' inability to cater to their children due to the poor economic situation. This made them to abandon their families to join terrorist groups. Hence, these large families of children are left with their mothers, who are also incapable of taking care of them. As a result, many of these children become vulnerable to potential predators that lure them with food in order to abuse them sexually. At some point, they become used to it and continue to engage in homosexual sex as a means of survival. The NGO worker said thus: 'while the fathers left their children to their mothers to cater for because of terrorist violence in the North-east, some men lure these children with a little penny and defile them at that tender age. So when they become used to it, it is no more an issue'.⁵² Furthermore, two NGO workers stated that the engagement in transactional sex is not limited to the victims themselves; some parents do give their children out to perpetrators in return for money or food. For instance, one NGO worker stated, 'parents in the North-east were willing to give their children out for sex in return for money'.⁵³

Interestingly, on many occasions perpetrators use food and money to lure men and boys into violating them sexually. In the IDP camps, older men and camp officials sexually exploit these vulnerable boys. 'Back at the camp, a man dragged me into a room and wanted to rape me. I told him I would not. He said he would give me money, and I rejected. So, he sent me out with a concrete warning not to see me near that area or tell anyone'.⁵⁴ Furthermore, another survivor stated thus:

The camp secretary used to seduce and harass boys sexually. There was this particular boy that the camp secretary usually gives him money and food to sleep with him. There was a specific day we saw him sexually violate the boy, so we resorted to the camp's security operatives. The security agents took him to the police station, and since then, we did not hear the man or the outcome of the case.⁵⁵

An aid worker corroborated the account of survivors thus: 'The people in charge of managing IDP camps, such as humanitarian workers and security agents, are involved in the sexual violence against boys. They are using sex in exchange for material resources or support. You must have sex with me in order for me to give you food'.⁵⁶ Security agents also substantiated the survivors' accounts thus: 'There is a recent case that we are handling, where a perpetrator asked a boy to sweep his room. As the boy entered the room, he locked the door and went ahead to rape the boy. After that, he gave the boy some money and told him to come back after two or three days'.⁵⁷

The quotes above demonstrate how material inequity makes men and boys more vulnerable while empowering perpetrators of sexual violence. Perpetrators invite these boys with the promise of helping them with money, food or a job. However, this is usually a trap to get the victims in a secluded place in order to rape them. 'We had a case of a boy who went to his father's friend to make some money. However, he was being raped but nobody knew about it'. Hence, with the rise of terrorism and its attendant poverty, young men and boys are rendered helpless and forced to sell their bodies, making them easy prey for sexual predators. The above is in tandem with Kathleen Jennings and Vesna Nikoli Ristanovi's 'sex of help' concept in theorising the CRSV in Haiti and Liberia, where sexual abuse by peacekeepers has become commonplace due to 'insecurity, poverty, lack of legal rights, physical and social protection'.⁵⁸ Furthermore, North-eastern Nigeria, reports and scholarly evidence show how mismanagement of material resources within IDP camps increases the vulnerability of women and girls, with many resorting to selling their bodies for money, food, shelter, protection, and marriage.⁵⁹ According to our findings, men and boys have similar experiences. Furthermore, in line with previous debates about whether sexual violence is opportunistic, strategic, or both,⁶⁰ we provide insights that help to nuance these arguments. In other words, in terrorism-affected LCB, men and boys lose agency or become sexually vulnerable as perpetrators exploit the social-economic conditions of men and boys in their pursuit of sexual gratification.

Discussion and conclusion

While the findings shed light on the political economy of CRSV and how violence and poverty combine to produce precarious situations for men and boys in the Lake Chad region, they also provide insight on CRSV, particularly, how sex-for-pleasure or opportunistic sex manifests in conflict and post-conflict settings. In other words, sex trafficking and sex-for-food/money are rooted in the offenders' desire for sexual pleasure, regardless of its monetary value to a range of players. Terrorist violence in the region has established platforms that enable sexual violence perpetrators to engage in, facilitate, and profit from sex trafficking activities in order to satisfy their sexual desires. The collapse of law and order has an impact on socio-cultural, legal, and

institutional structures that regulate or at best constrain would-be perpetrators or encourage the exploitation of conflict and material imbalance to engage in sexual violence. Thus, the narratives of survivors/victims, NGO workers, and security agents give context and empirical data that supports the sexed story argument as an explanatory variable for CRSV against men.⁶¹ It demonstrates how violence, power, and dominance are symmetrically combined with sexual pleasure to explain the forms and drivers of CRSV against men and boys. Hence, this research contributes to the intricacies and multifaceted nature of CSRV's against men. The sexual pleasure motive behind sex trafficking and sex-for-food/money is in line with recent research on sexual violence victimisation of men and boys in unstable situations such as forced migrations among displaced people migrating from the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, or the MENA region to Europe and the Mediterranean. Men and boys migrants, like women and girls, are especially vulnerable in forced migration situations, as perpetrators in transit and destination countries frequently exploit their vulnerability to sexually abuse them.⁶²

Furthermore, the study's findings call into question cultural gender scripts and popular masculinity narratives that suggest males are immune to sexual violence. In other words, cultural normative standards of hegemonic masculinity downplay male sexual victimisation, assuming that males cannot be raped. These assumptions were exacerbated further by pervasive heteronormative interpretations of sexual violence that reflected and stressed the female victim-male-perpetrator binary. These assumptions frequently place certain bodies as victims, influencing politics, lawmaking, and humanitarian initiatives. Thus, Javiad and Hlavka, for example, call for a sophisticated conceptualisation of the relationship between cultural norms of manhood, the construction of male victimisation, and rape myths.⁶³ Our anthropological field narratives from sexual violence survivors/victims in north-eastern Nigeria help to contextualise the male gender's vulnerability to CRSV.

In conclusion, our research highlights the need to reconsider our understanding of the prevalent concept of masculine immunity to sexual violence and exploitation. It also emphasises the importance of comprehensive humanitarian support and advocacy for male sexual violence victims in conflict and post-conflict settings. To this purpose, civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations must enhance their humanitarian support and advocacy operations for male victims of sexual exploitation, as they are the closest to the victims. While we do not dismiss or minimise the experiences of women and girls, we do urge for a more nuanced approach to the subject of CRSV. This will guarantee that CRSV cases against men are reported, addressed, perpetrators convicted, and survivors/victims receive the support they require. Survivors/victims should be provided with proper assistance and care in order to lessen the pain and stigmatisation they have endured.

Notes

1. ICRC, "‘Hopeless’ suffering in Lake Chad" (2017), <https://www.reuters.com/article/nigeria-violence-chad-aid-idINL5N1EU1V6>
2. Kamta et al., 'Insecurity, Resource Scarcity, and Migration', 6830
3. Njoku and Akintayo, 'Sex for Survival' 285

4. United Nation High Commission for Refugees, 'A Call for Action', (2017) <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/58965>.
5. Barron and Frost, 'Men, Boys, and LGBTQ'; Raney, 'Unseen Victims of sex trafficking'; Schulz, 'Displacement from gendered personhood', 1101
6. Onyango and Hampanda, 'Social Construction of masculinity' 237
7. Schulz, 'Displacement from gendered personhood' 1101
8. Sivakumaran, 'Sexual violence against men' 253
9. Schulz, 'Displacement from gendered personhood; Manivannan, 'Seeking Justice for Male victims of sexual violence', 635; Dolan, 'Inclusive Gender', 625; Eichert, 'Wartime male sexual violence', 409; Schulz and Touquet, 'Queering Explanatory framework' 1169
10. Dolan, Baaz & Stern, 'what is sexual about conflict-related sexual violence?' 1151
11. Dolan, Baaz & Stern, 'what is sexual about conflict-related sexual violence?' 1151; Schulz and Touquet, 'Queering Explanatory framework' 1169
12. Njoku, 'Queering Terrorism'; Njoku and Dery 'Spiritual security' 1785; Schulz and Touquet 'Queering Explanatory framework' 1169
13. Schulz and Touquet 'Queering Explanatory Framework' 1169
14. Baaz and Stern, 'Sexual in wartime sexual violence', Schulz and Touquet 'Queering Explanatory Framework' 1169
15. Baines, 'forced marriage as a political project'; Porter, 'moral spaces and sexual transgression', 1009
16. Onyango and Hampanda, 'Social Construction of masculinity' 237
17. Dolan, Baaz & Stern, 'what is sexual about conflict-related sexual violence?' 1151
18. Ibid
19. Ibid
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22. UNDP, 'Human development report 2016'
23. Ibid, Owonikoko and Momodu, 'Environmental Degradation' 1296, Ekumaoko and Ezemenaka, 'Responsibility to Protect' 498
24. Ibid
25. Njoku and Akintayo, 'Sex for Survival' 285
26. UNICEF, 'Fleeing Boko Haram', (2020) <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/fleeing-boko-haram-and-tricked-sexual-exploitation/32525>
27. ICRC, "'Hopeless" suffering in Lake Chad', (2017) <https://www.reuters.com/article/nigeria-violence-chad-aid-idINL5N1EU1V6>
28. UNHCR, 'Assessment of Trafficking Risks' (2020) <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/75273>
29. Interview with Counter-terrorism Security Officer in the Nigerian Police, Lagos, 11 October 2020
30. Njoku, 'The ligaments of counter terrorism regime', 1233; Njoku and Akintayo, 'Sex for survival', 285; Njoku and Dery, 'Spiritual security', 1169; Njoku, 'Queering Terrorism', 2; Interview with Counter-terrorism Security Officer in the Nigerian Police, Lagos, 11 October 2020
31. Amnesty International, 'Nigeria: A harrowing journey' (2021) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr44/4959/2021/en/>
32. Interview with Programme manager of a sexual assault Centre, Borno, 27 October 2020.
33. Schulz and Touquet, 'Queering explanatory frameworks', 1169; Dolan, Baaz & Stern, 'what is sexual about conflict-related sexual violence?' 1151
34. UN, 'Palermo Protocol'
35. Jespersen, 'Conflict and Migration' 3

36. Ibid, 1
37. Interview: Survivor 1, Borno: October 27, 2020
38. Interview with Survivor 2, Adamawa: November 2, 2020
39. Interview with Gender, Security and peace-building NGO worker, Lagos: October 19, 2020
40. Interview with Gender, Security and peace-building NGO worker, Lagos: October 19, 2020
41. Andrews, 'US Domestic Prosecution', 415; Kapstein, 'The New Global Slave Trade', 103
42. Jespersen, 'Conflict and Migration', 1
43. Ibid
44. Schulz and Touquet, 'Queering explanatory frameworks' 1169; Baaz and Stern, 'The sexual in wartime sexual violence', 2.
45. Ibid
46. Westendorf and Searle, 'Sexual exploitation', 365
47. Westendorf and Searle, 'Sexual exploitation', 365; Pankhurst, 'Gendered war and peace', 11
48. Westendorf and Searle, 'Sexual exploitation', 365
49. Spencer, 'Making peace', 167
50. Interview with Gender advocacy and human Security NGO worker, Abuja: October 10, 2020
51. Interview with State Emergency Management Agency, Borno: October 27, 2020
52. Interview with Counter-terrorism Security Officer in the Nigerian Police, Lagos, October 11, 2020
53. Interview with Gender advocacy and human Security NGO worker, Abuja: October 10, 2020
54. Interview with Survivor 3, Borno: October 28, 2020
55. Interview with Survivor 4, Borno: October 20, 2020
56. Interview with Gender-advocacy, Security and Development NGO worker, Abuja: October 12, 2020
57. Interview with Counter-terrorism security agent in the Nigerian Police, Borno: October 28, 2020
58. Jennings & Ristanovic, 'Local sex industries', 17; Jennings, 'Service sex and security', 313
59. Njoku and Akintayo, 'Sex for survival', 285
60. Schulz and Touquet, 'Queering explanatory frameworks', 1169; Baaz & Stern, 'The sexual in wartime sexual violence'2.
61. Dolan, Baaz & Stern, 'What is sexual about conflict-related sexual violence', 1166; Schulz and Touquet, 'Queering explanatory frameworks', 1169
62. Belanteri et al 'Sexual violence against migrants'; Pertek et al 'Forced migration and sexual and gender-based violence'; Chynoweth et al "Sexual Violence against Men and Boys' 90
63. Javaid, 'Social attitudes surrounding male rape', 270; Hlavka, 'Young men and sexual victimization' 482

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