

The Challenges of Managing Bomb Blasts Victims in Nigeria

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Abstract

Bomb blasts have become a recurring decimal since its first appearance in the criminological scene in Nigeria in 1986. The paper examined the nature and patterns of Bomb Blasts in Nigeria; the effects on the victims and the citizenry, the treatment of the victims and the challenges which the victims of Bomb blast face in Nigeria. The author relied on personal observation and secondary sources for the data embedded and used the Life Style and Routine Activities Theories as guide for the research. The paper noted that bomb blast in the country has been in the form of parcel bombs, suicide bombing, planted Improvised Explosive Device (IED) and the targets so far had been churches, mosques, highways, telecommunication masts, military installations/police stations, government buildings, schools, soccer viewing centres and car parks to mention but a few. The effects of bomb blasts on the victims include death, permanent incapacitation, body injuries and psychological trauma and on the larger Nigerian society are development of crime/attack fear, lull on social and business activities. The paper noted that much is needed to be done to alleviate the sufferings of bomb blasts victims by government, private individuals and organizations which should include financial and medical compensation, increase in security surveillance, proper rehabilitation of the victims and adequate funding of Disaster Management Agencies.

Keywords: Psychological trauma, blast victims, insurgents, victimization, rehabilitation.

1 INTRODUCTION

The issue of Bomb blast has become a recurring decimal in many parts of the world today. Countries like Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Syria, Pakistan and Nigeria had been enmeshed with frequent bomb blast incidents. In these countries, there has been human loss, devastation of the environment, destruction of property, psychological trauma of victims and damaging international image. Criminal victimization is a horrible experience. It creates fear in the minds of primary victims as well as secondary victims and third – parties like the victims' significant and genealogical others (Radda and Ndubueze, 2013). The office of Victims of crime (2012) outlined some of the challenges of crime victims to include the feeling of fear, share of guilt, fear of not being believed, dependence on certain category of offenders, lack of knowledge of the protocol of reporting crimes, the belief that the abusers will retaliate, the belief that the victims would be blamed and the fear of not being believed.

Nigeria joined the league of Bomb blast suffering nations in the World when in 1986 a letter bomb killed the publisher of Newswatch Magazine, Mr. Dele Giwa. Since then Nigeria has been witnessing series of Bomb blasts. However, there has been an upsurge till date when the Boko Haram insurgency started its activities in Bornu State in 2009. The study of victims of crimes, disasters and the like has always be neglected whereas victims constitute an important element in the understanding of the nature of crime and environmental disasters. As observed by Radda and Ndubueze (2013) of all the element of the crime cycle, the victims of crimes are perhaps the worst hit but ironically least discussed. Bomb explosions have occurred in many parts of Nigeria from Lagos, Abuja, Kano, Kaduna to Maiduguri, Jos, Bauchi to mention but a few. The management of the victims presents some herculean tasks. This paper therefore seeks to examine the issue of bomb blasts and their victims in Nigeria and to explore the avenues of proper management of the bomb blasts victims in the country.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of the study was to examine the issue of bomb blast victims in Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

- (i) examine the nature and patterns of bomb blasts in Nigeria
- (ii) find out the effects of bomb blasts in Nigeria
- (iii) examine the treatment and challenges victims of bomb blast face in Nigeria

3. METHODOLOGY

The study is based on direct observation of bomb incidents in Nigeria by the author and secondary sources such as published books, journals and newspapers.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Criminological Literature is replete with several theories of victimization such as the Victim Precipitation theory, the Life Style theory, the Deviant Place theory, the Routine Activity theory and the Equivalent theory (Cohen and Felson, 1979; Siegel, 2005). However, the two theories that provided guide to this study are the Life Style theory and the Routine Activity theory. The Life Style theory postulates that an individual may become target of

criminal offenders because of life style choice like being promiscuous, living in shanty environment, going to recreational centres or drinking joints for fun etc.

On the other hand, the Routine Activity theory according to Cohen, Felson and Land (1980) cited in Iwarimie- Jaja (2003) routinized activities create the opportunity for motivated offenders to commit predatory crime. The theory argues that victimization is highly dependent on the routine activities of people's daily life. Cohen and Felson (1979) noted certain necessary ingredients that must exist for crime to occur. These include a motivated offender, a suitable target and absence of capable guardianship. These two theories are quite applicable to the issue of Bomb blasts incidents. This is because where you have large crowd of people like group of worshippers, people seeking for social fun, soccer enthusiasts or motor parks or shopping malls they are likely to be victims of Bomb attack. In the same vein, the absence of guardianship (security presence) provides opportunity for bomb attack.

5. HISTORY OF BOMB BLASTS IN NIGERIA

The history of Bomb blast in Nigeria is comparatively a very short one. It can be traced to 19 October, 1986 when a parcel letter bomb killed Mr. Dele Giwa, the founding Editor-in-Chief of Newswatch magazine. It was believed to be State – Sponsored during president Ibrahim Babangida regime (Kolawole, 2011). Apart from this, there were pockets of bomb explosion during the despotic rule of Late General Sani Abacha which was also considered as State- Sponsored to intimidate opponents of his regime. There was also an isolated case of accidental bomb explosion of Ikeja Cantonment. However, the level of bomb blasts reached its peak between 2009 and 2014. In Nigeria. (See table 1) Majority of the bombings are attributed to the activities of Boko Haram, an Islamic revolutionary group who are opposed to western education. Boko Haram literally means in Hausa – Western education is forbidden or is a sin (Haram).

Table 1: Some Bomb Blast incidents in Nigeria (1986 – 2014)

Date	Location	State
19 th October, 1986	Dele Giwa's House, Ikeja	Lagos
31 st May, 1995	Bomb attack at Ilorin Stadium	Kwara
18 th January 1996	Durbar Hotel, Kaduna	Kaduna
20 th January, 1996	Aminu Kano International Airport, Kano	Kano
11 th April, 1996	Ikeja Cantonment	Lagos
14 th November 1996	Murtala Mohammed Airport	Lagos
27 th January, 2012	Bomb Explosion at Ikeja Military Cantonment	Lagos
15 th March 2010	Explosion at Amnesty Dialogue at PTI, Warri	Delta
7 th September, 2010	Prison Bomb	Bauchi
1 st October, 2010	50 th Independence Anniversary Venue, Abuja	FCT, Abuja
8 th April, 2011	Bombing of INEC Office, Suleja	Niger
15 th April, 2011	INEC Office, Maiduguri	Bornu
22 nd April, 2011	Bombing of a Prison, Yola	Adamawa
29 th May, 2011	Army Barrack, Bauchi	Bauchi
17 th June, 2011	Bombing of Police Force Headquarters	FCT, Abuja
26 th June 2011	Bomb attack on a Beer Garden, Maiduguri	Bornu
10 th July, 2011	Bomb Rocked All Christian Fellowship Church, Suleja	Niger
26 th August, 2011	Bomb Blast at United Nations Headquarters	FCT, Abuja
25 th December, 2011	St. Theresa Catholic Church, Madalla	Niger
20 th January 2012	Multiple Bomb attack in Kano Metropolis	Kano
28 th January, 2012	Attack on Gambiru Ngala	Bornu
7 th February, 2012	Bomb attack on Military Barrack, Kaduna	Kaduna
26 th April, 2012	This Day Office	Kaduna
26 th April, 2012	This Day Office	Abuja
17 th June, 2012	Multiple Church Bombings in Sabon Gari, Wussasa, Kaduna	Kaduna
3 rd October, 2012	Bomb massacre of Mubi	Adamawa
25 th November, 2012	Bomb Blast at a Church at Military Cantonment, Jaji	Kaduna
18 th March, 2013	Bomb blast at Luxury Park, Sabon – Gari, Kano	Kano
7 th May, 2013	Bomb attack on Army Barrack, Bama	Bornu
29 th July, 2013	Multiple explosions in New Road and Enugu Road, Sabon – Gari	Kano
24 th October, 2013	Co-ordinated attack on Military barrack and Police Station, Damaturu	Yobe
11 th February, 2014	Bomb attack on Kondugu	Bornu
14 th April, 2014	Bomb explosion at Yanyan Bus Terminus	FCT, Abuja
1 st May, 2014	Another Bomb attack at Yanyan few metres from the Bus previous attack	FCT, Abuja
20 th May, 2014	2 car bomb exploded at Busy Market in Central City of Jos	Plateau
18 th June, 2014	Blast at Soccer Viewing Centre, Damaturu	Yobe
23 rd June, 2014	Bomb Blast at School of Hygiene BUK Road Kano	Kano
25 th June, 2014	Bomb Blast at Emab Plaza Business Centre, Wuse, Abuja	FCT, Abuja
23 rd July, 2014	Two Bomb Blasts occurred in Kaduna metropolis	Kaduna
24 th July, 2014	Bomb blast at Luxury Park, Sabon Gari,	Kano
27 th July, 2014	Bomb blast at St. Charles Catholic Church, Nomansland and North West University Gate	Kano Kano
28 th July, 2014	Two female bomb suicide at NNPC Mega Station Hotoro and Trade Fair Complex, Zoo Road	Kano Kano

SOURCE: Compiled by the author from This Day, Nation, Daily Trust, Punch, Leadership, Sahara Reporters Newspapers, BBC and Aljezeera.

A cursory look at table I shows the large scale nature and spread of bomb attacks in Nigeria particularly

by the dreaded Boko Haram insurgents with much concentration in states like Borno, Bauchi, Yobe, Adamawa, Kano and Kaduna states. Bomb blasts have led to loss of human lives in the country. According to AFP report (2014), over 2,800 people have been killed by the action of the group. Property worth million of Naira have also been lost. Today, victims who survived bomb blasts attack are either permanently incapacitated or suffered from various degrees of burns. Both the primary victims and secondary victims like family members, friends of dead victims continue to suffer from psychological trauma, fear of attack and loss of interest in social life again. Apart from this, there is threat of shaken peaceful co-existence among the various ethnic and religious groups in the country today. Business lull have been reported in many affected areas due to fear of attack and high mass migration of people from affected areas, with its attendant evils. Besides, the bombing syndrome by the Boko Haram insurgent has earned Nigeria a terrorist state by the International Community thus affecting Nigeria's image abroad.

6. THE NATURE AND PATTERNS OF BOMB BLASTS IN NIGERIA

A critical analysis of the various Bomb Blast incidents in Nigeria has revealed certain patterns. At the initial stage of its occurrence, it was targeted at individuals perceived to be political enemies of government. However, with the coming of the Boko Haram, the targets so far have been government establishment, security agencies such as the Police, the Army and the State Security Service; telecommunication outfits like MTN, Airtel, Etisalat, Globacom; religious organizations like Churches and Mosques; schools, motor parks, Hotels and highways, particularly near security check points. The tools used by the attackers range from parcel bombs, petrol bombs, to Improvised Explosive Devices (IED).

Crime can be displaced due to crime hardening by law enforcement agencies. Crime displacement is a change of offenders behaviour along illegitimate means which is designed to circumvent either specific preventing measures or more general conditions unfavourable to offenders usual made of operating (Gabor, 1990:66). Clarke and Felson (1998) have pointed out that crime can be displaced in five ways, which include spatial, temporal, target, tactical and crime time displacement. Evidence abounds in the way the blasts occur. Geographically or spatially, there has been shift from one location to the other; the timing also shift from morning to the evening and vice versa; there has been changing in tactics from the planting of Improvised Explosive Devices (IED), Car bombing, female suicide bombing to petrol bombs. At the initial stage the attack was on government facilities and security agencies but this later shifted to private attack and religious organizations.

7. CHALLENGES OF BOMB BLAST VICTIMS

The management of Bomb blasts victims in Nigeria has been a herculean task. This is because this form of violent crime is new and alien to the country. It is unlike Pakistan and Syria that had serial attacks over the years and had established bomb victims programmes (Khalid et al, 2012). In Nigeria, the post- occurrence management of bomb blasts victims involves evacuation of victims to various hospital for medical treatment by rescue agencies like the Police, Army, Civil Defence Corps, Federal Roads Safety Corps (FRSC) and National Emergency Management Agencies (NEMA). However, the victims of bomb blasts in the country face a plethora of problems.

1. **Negligence of victims.** Although victims are quickly rushed to hospitals for treatment, many bomb blasts victims have died from burns and injuries because of late attendance, inadequate care or non-availability of drugs for treatment. In some cases, after series of visits by government officials nothing else is heard. The victims are therefore left to their fate.
2. **Poor compensation programmes:** Victims of crime programmes are usually embarked upon by governments through legislation, which provide compensation to victims, (Siegel, 2005; Iwarimie-jaja, 2003). However, in Nigeria, victims of bomb blasts are hardly compensated or at best compensation delayed. For instance, in the January 27, 2002 Ikeja Cantonment blast, only 84 out of 154 families were compensated after 10 years of its occurrence (Olowopejo, 2014).
3. **Rehabilitation:** Victims of bomb blasts who survive may have suffered from one form of injury or the other; some are permanently incapacitated while some have their means of livelihood destroyed. Under this scenario, the victims need to be put back to their former positions before the blast in terms of reintegrating them into the larger society by making life comfortable to them like providing jobs, loans or financial assistance for their lost business or donations by spirited individuals or groups.
4. **Poor Funding.** The whole gamut of managing bomb blasts victims has been attributed to poor finance at the disposal of government and disaster management agencies in the country. Perhaps it is in the bid to garner financial assistance from individuals, international communities and business organizations that Nigeria President Dr. Goodluck Jonathan inaugurated a committee to

- that effect. Poor funding has prevented proper rehabilitation and compensation of the victims.
5. **Psychological problems.** Primary victims of bomb blasts develop serious fear of crime or repeated attack while secondary victims such as families or friends of primary victims become socially and psychologically depressed due to loss of dear ones. These two categories of victims need proper guidance and counselling in order to prevent abnormal behaviour or allowed to develop the desire to attack to perceived source(s) of the blasts.

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Bomb blasts have become a permanent feature of Nigeria socio-political scene in recent times. The occurrence has led to loss of lives, destruction of property, incapacitation of victims, development of fear of attack, migration from affected areas and decline in business cycle. The bomb blasts victims are badly managed due to factors ranging from negligence of victims, poor compensation programmes, rehabilitation of victims to inadequate funding.

As a result of the challenges which bomb blasts victims face in Nigeria, the following recommendations are made. Firstly, Disaster Management Centres should be established in all nooks and crannies of the country, particularly in the North-East geopolitical zone where terrorist activities are concentrated. Secondly, the various Disaster Management agencies such as National Emergency Management Agencies, Civil Defence Corps, the Security Agencies such as the Police and Army units should be well funded and equipped to respond quickly to bomb blasts scenes and carry out post occurrence management properly. Thirdly, mass campaign should be embarked upon by the government of Nigeria and its security agencies on the need for the citizenry to be security conscious. Fourthly, efforts should be made by the government of Nigeria to address the root causes of the insurgence in the country and reconcile aggrieved group(s) to stop further bomb blast incidents.

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