

Confession, Mental Life and Psychosocial (Re)Conditioning: The Case of Children Affected by Armed Banditry in Zangon Kataf Local Government Area of Kaduna State Nigeria

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Abstract: Armed Banditry has some traumatizing tendencies capable of disrupting the psychosocial behavior of children in Nigeria. The study uses confession as grid of narrativization to unveil the psychosocial state of children in selected communities in Zangon Kataf Local Government Area of Kaduna State considered to be the most hit by banditry. These communities include Magamiya II, Kurmin Masara, Gan Gora and Kan Kibori. The study categorizes children as young humans from the ages of 12 to 17. It maintains that confession serves as a viable tool for unveiling the mental states and tendencies of psychosocial reconditioning in children affected by banditry. These personality realignments, if not properly addressed, could trigger disruptive experiences in children which could lead to anxiety, restlessness, resentment, violence, and, above all, trauma. The study uses qualitative and quantitative methods in collating and interpreting data. Through the qualitative method, a total of 14 participants were selected from the four villages. Under strict privacy, they were interviewed focusing particularly on their feeling of loss either of loved ones and access to livelihood and how these have disrupted their sense of humanity. These confessions were further transcribed and analyzed using the quantitative approach to examine some of the traumatizing emotions these children are harboring and how such have, in turn, alter their neurotic pattern in ways that have reshaped their psychosocial behavior. The study finds, among other things, that children are neglected in the process of peace building in communities affected by banditry. It recommends, among other things, that children should be availed the opportunity to participate in the process of peace building to give them a sense of belonging. This, the study concludes, will checkmate the activities of criminal elements killing people in the guise of herdsmen.

Keywords: Confession, Talking Therapy, Banditry, Psychosocial (Re)Conditioning, Psychoanalysis, Mental Life.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This research is set on the assumption that “Confession”, as tool for “self-reflection” (Daymond, and Visagie, 2012:717) offers effective means not only for revealing the unconscious conditions of individuals but provides the platform within which the history and fate of a nation can be implicated as well. It, as Srivastava and Gupta (2024:5) suggest, allows people to share “their personal and inner experiences” in a manner that reveals their mental state

and gives access into their psychosocial conditions. The research establishes the extent to which confession provides a more intimate and honest introspection on the realities of a people. It explores the connection between Confession, Talking Therapy and mental health in a manner that forges interdisciplinary discourse by offering contexts for apprehending and recovering the psychic shifts of children in crises areas. It uses selected communities in Zangon Kataf Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria to demonstrate that these discursive platforms provide viable

tools for uncovering repressive patterns that, if not properly handled can alter the psychosocial behavior of children affected by armed banditry in Nigeria.

The study utilizes the qualitative method approach to reveal the psychic states of children who have experienced insurgency and how this has distorted their perception of the Nigerian space. Through these approaches the study demonstrates ways in which some children in these selected communities have been traumatized by the activities of banditry. It exposes the extent to which these children have felt abandoned and displaced in the ongoing efforts for peace building in curbing the effects of insurgency in Nigeria. It also reveals ways in which confession serves as therapeutic platform for children caught in insurgency in Nigeria. In addition to these, the study offers perspectives that will benefit policy-makers concerned with proffering both long- and short-term solutions on the consequences of banditry on the social order of Nigeria.

To achieve these, the study delimits its scope to the experiences of children in selected communities in Zangon Kataf Local Government Area of Kaduna State. These areas include Magamiya II, Kurmin Masara, Gan Gora and Kan Kibori. It does this to offer a far-reaching perspective that can be effective in understanding the mental conditions of these children. The goal is to provide model that will help in curbing psychosocial disorder in children affected by armed banditry. This approach, it is hoped, would propose novel perspective especially to policy-makers in the ongoing efforts to correct the effect of insurgency in the country. Its insights and analytical contexts will provide viable template that could help in understanding conditions of children whose experiences can create both a sense of ambivalence and the tendencies of future aggression in the country.

➤ *The Interlink Between Confession, Human Experiences and Psychosomatic (Re)Conditioning*

This study determines the extent to which human experiences (re)conditions their psychosomatic state in ways that can manifest as “hysteria” – a kind of neurotic symptom which are “unconsciously converted into physical symptom” (Freud, 1940:53). If the human mind is socially constituted as Rousseau proposes, it can therefore be said, as Erikson (1987:19) maintains, that “the mind is a ‘thing’ separate from the body, and a society a ‘thing’ outside of the individual”. The psychosocial agencies by which the sense of humanity is constituted, namely; the ‘mind’ and ‘society’ or what Erikson calls ‘psycho- and social – are interdependent signifying structures to the extent that none can define itself outside of the other. Consequent upon the above propositions this study hypothesizes that relational rupture between the ‘mind’ and ‘society’ affects the somatic cell – or human body and the (un)consciousness it embodies, in some significant ways.

To account for ways in which this rupture affects not only the human mind but also reorganizes human behavior in relational terms, the study uses the experiences of children affected by banditry in selected communities in Zangon Kataf Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria. It does this by allowing the sampled population comprising of children

from the ages of 12 to 17 whose parents and relations were victims of armed banditry to freely express their experiences. Through their confessions the study offers them the platform for what Benton (1952:3) calls “‘Chimney Sweeping’ – the cleansing of soul”. Using this model, the study identifies some “remnant, as precipitates, if you like it, of affectively toned experiences” (Benton, 1952:3), which, Benton concludes, can lead to “psychic traumata”.

These disruptive experiences, as observed in this study, are ‘psychic stimulus’ responsible for neurological crisis in children from crisis prone areas. It offers that ‘psychic stimulus’ such as aggression, anxiety, fear, anger, are elements of neural disorders that can shape personality and, in extreme cases, destroy it. Such neurotic stimulus especially in children, the study observes, are traceable to experiences within the communities in which they live. At other times – and this is often difficult to trace – these disorders are triggered by experiences that define the social order within which children grow.

Erikson understands the latency of psychosomatic crisis and how it is capable of affecting a child. In his therapeutic investigation, he did not only engage the child but he also engages their parents in the context of the community in which they live. This, he believes, is because “therapeutic investigations into a segment of one child’s history ...help a whole family to accept a crisis in their midst as a crisis in the family history” (Erikson, 1987:28). This history, it can be added, is not only of the family but of the community for which the family is a part. A psychosocial crisis is, therefore, an emotional crisis to which affected children are saliently responding to and redefining themselves and the people around them.

This study, therefore, reveals ways in which behavioral patterns in a child’s environment as proposed by Skinner (1972), and Bandura (1977) shape the way their minds function. ‘Psychic stimulus’; say, of violence, might not only cause damage to a child’s brain but can also turn them into violent people. This is because some vicarious experiences children encounter in their communities – the brutal killing of their loved ones, the decimation of their communities, and the decapitation of their loved ones, among other things – through banditry are capable of distorting their behaviors. This justifies Bandura’s (1977:128) position that “human destructiveness is typically due to learning, notably observational, rather than to some innate instinct”. It is in recognition of the possibilities of the manifestation of these learned behaviors that this research uses confession as a viable means of unveiling the psychic state of children within the selected crisis areas in Zangon-Kataf Local Government Area.

Studies by Worthen (1974), Harvey (2018), and Stein (2011) among others have demonstrated that confession has some therapeutic effects of healing both the human body and mind. It, as they demonstrate in their studies, provides, the avenue for human interaction – the telling, and the listening and the seeing eye to eye – in a manner that unveils hidden emotions. Some of these emotions might never be vented out

as the victims carry it underneath their unconscious. Other victims, on the other hand, might feel ashamed to talk about these experiences as they feel people around them are not aware they carry them. This, in a long run, reshapes their behavioral patterns unconsciously. This study establishes the need to provide avenues that allows these children to talk-out as, the researchers believe, venting it out would make them feel relief and, if followed properly with counseling, help them to let go of such emotions. The study is therefore; identifies conditions that can endanger the social order of Nigeria as a country and, through it, recommend some therapeutic measures that will heal not only the children but the nation as well.

➤ *An Overview of Armed Banditry in Southern Kaduna, North-West Nigeria*

Nigeria's North-Western States especially Kaduna, Zamfara, Katsina and Sokoto have had harrowing experiences on the activities of armed banditry. Gulbi, Ahmad, Karofi, Rambo and Sani (2024:2) connect the successful operations of these elements to "the vast ungoverned forests surrounding most of the states in the region". They maintain that the lack of state presence in these forest areas has created an environment conducive for the emergence of competing and rival groups of armed and criminal gangs operating under different guise. One of the prominent covers under which these criminal armed bandits operate in North Western States of Nigeria, as they observe, is land and water resources.

The International Crisis Group (ICG) (2020) supports this position by suggesting that banditry and other violent acts are driven by fierce competition over land and water resources between Fulani herders and farmers, both of whom have mobilized armed groups to protect their interests and communities. The crises, as ICG (2020) further notes, are occasioned by "climate change-related environmental degradation and high population growth". Earlier incidences of these crises justify this claim given especially that both herders and farmers depend on land and water to sustain their livelihood.

Other scholars offer more revealing contexts for understanding reasons and effects of these evolving crises. Ojo, Oyewole and Aina (2023) associate the root cause of this evolving trend of banditry to "bad governance, poverty, inequalities, youth unemployment, marginalization, and weak institutional capacity of the state in local governance, forest management, justice system and security". Their views offer perspectives that will help in understanding the multidimensional manifestations of crises escalating from activities of armed banditry. These, in their words, include "complex forces of politicization of security, ethno-communal conflict, climate change-related migration, illegal gold mining, resource competition among diverse ethno-communal groups, and conflicting interests of the political elites, especially in the northern parts of the country". Their work makes strong argument especially against the backdrop of "the complicity of the state institutions and the political elites as well as some faceless business interests (in illegal mining and weapon merchants) that are crisis enablers and

complicit in the reign of terror by the armed banditry in the north-west" (Ojo, Oyewole and Aina 2023:23).

Within the context of Southern Kaduna, Umaru and Sabo (2021) lament on the consistency with which "the attackers are frequent with the people being killed, house and farmlands razed down by the fire (sic) with kidnappings and other dangerous and forceful occupation of lands". Their findings show the near absence of security presence in these communities. Security patrol, they point, is not constant and, as a result, no serious arrests of bandits have been affected by the security forces. The result of this ineffectiveness, they conclude, is the general sense of dissatisfaction with the performance of the security forces. Their findings agree with the position of Ojo, Oyewole and Aina (2023) that the state institutions are complicit in the rise of armed banditry in North-West Nigeria.

Akran and Gaiya (2025) dissect incidences of banditry and the experiences of internally displaced persons in Adaraland located within the geopolitical space characterized as Southern Kaduna. Their work shows that "banditry is a ploy to destabilize Adaraland and open it up to occupation by non-Adara people" (Akran and Gaiya, 2025:9). This position corroborates with earlier submissions that project banditry as politically motivated activities. They add to this politicization of banditry by implicating the media particularly in the way in which they "downplay the level of destruction of lives and properties in Adaraland through under reporting and inadequate publicity" (Akran and Gaiya, 2025:9).

In their work titled "Criminal Armed Herdsmen Operation in Southern Kaduna, Nigeria: Implication on Human and Food Security" Umaru, Yale, Dhikyilnan, Madueke, Obioma, Gurumyen and Maiwada (2022) capture the implications of armed herdsmen operations on human and food security in the Southern Kaduna region of Kaduna State. Using the descriptive survey method and the routine activity theory, their paper "suggests that deaths, hospitalizations, burning of houses, among many others, were major implications on human security while burning of farmlands, kidnappings on the farm and closure of markets were amongst major implications of food security in the region" (Umaru, et al, 2022:11). The findings from their study establish that relations of "some respondents have been killed, while others have faced hospitalizations due to shock and living in horrific fears. Others are loss of lives, destruction of farmlands, and loss of animals, amongst other experiences of the respondents in this study area" (Umaru, et al, 2022:20). Their findings are in line with the objective of this study especially that it confirms the traumatic states of people living in Southern Kaduna.

Okorie and Amadi (2025) provide yet another insightful perspectives on the extent to which "banditry has affected socioeconomic development in Kaduna State, Nigeria from 2012-2022". It argues that there is a nexus between banditry and socio-economic development and that banditry has, in all ramifications, devastated the economic and social potentials of North Central and North Western states of Nigeria (Okorie and Amadi, 2025:16). They, like other scholars, decry the

lackluster attitudes of the political elites towards tackling this menace by maintaining that “the very sacred commandment given to a responsible government is to guide and protect the lives and property of the people” (Okorie and Amadi, 2025:16). They conclude by pointing that any government that allows criminal elements “to exact violence, mayhem and catastrophe by killing and kidnapping the people and requesting ransom, destroying the businesses and properties of the people that have socially contracted the government with massive human and natural resources ...has failed ...” (Okorie and Amadi, 2025:16). Their study finds, among other things, that “the causes of banditry in Kaduna State between 2011-2021 were multifaceted, mainly due to the breakdown of political, socio-economic and geographical order of Kaduna State” (Okorie and Amadi, 2025:16).

These literatures have confirmed the prevalence of banditry in North Western Nigeria with particular focus on Southern Kaduna. Some of the literatures have argued that the situation has political undertone. They justify this position by pointing especially at the lack of state and security presence in affected areas which, to them, make them complicit in the rise of banditry in the region. Others have associated banditry to climate change as it has caused the scramble for resources to sustain their farming activities and cater for their animals. Copious literatures further attributed the cause of banditry to bad governance, poverty, inequality, youth unemployment and, among many other things, the failure of the Nigerian justice system. These, as some literatures have revealed, have destabilized the Southern Kaduna region and have opened it up to occupation by invaders. It has, as pointed by yet other literatures, caused countless number of deaths, hospitalization, burning of houses and farmlands. The effect of these is the disruption of socio-economic activities in the region.

In all these literatures, none, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, has focused on children especially the extent to which confession can help in recovering their psychosocial conditions. This gap is necessary, as the research will illustrate ways in which confession can serve as a viable tool for unveiling tendencies of psychosocial disorder in children affected by banditry. The essence is to demonstrate that this disorder, if not properly addressed, could trigger disruptive experiences in children which could lead to anxiety, restlessness, resentment, violence, and, above all, trauma.

II. METHODOLOGY

➤ Study Design

The study deploys qualitative approach by collecting data through interviews among young persons in four communities of Zangon Kataf Local Government Area of Kaduna State Nigeria. These villages include Magamiya II, Kurmin Masara, Gan Gora and Kan Kibori. This data was collected from 21st September to 5th October, 2024. Interviews were conducted using probes to facilitate discussions among the participants. Also, a tape recorder was used to record the discussions from participants, with their permission, which was translated into the English language.

Secondary materials such as internet sources, textbooks and Library resources were used to enable the interpretation of data.

➤ Data Analysis

After completion of the field data collection phase, recordings from the sampled population were translated into the English language. The interview transcripts were then sorted out and named according to the four communities which consisted of 14 participants. Thematic and sub-thematic analysis of the interview transcripts was deployed using the qualitative approach. This was done using additional materials such as textbooks, internet and library sources.

➤ Ethical Approval

We first of all, visited the communities and identified with various community leaders. We identified ourselves by showing them our Identity Cards and sensitized them on the purpose of our research. They granted us permission and helped us to identify potential participants who met our eligibility criteria. We went further to explain our study aims and objectives for them to make an informed decision about participating in the study. Participants were assured of utmost confidentiality and informed consent was obtained from their parents and or guardians before the commencement of the interview. To ensure confidentiality, the participants were characterized according to their villages as Magamiya Respondents 1, 2, 3 and 4; Gan Gora Respondents 1,2,3; Kurmin Masara Respondents 1, 2, and 3; and Kan Kibori Respondent 1,2,3 and 4 respectively. Caution was also taken when discussion became sensitive and emotional for members as experts within us offered them counseling and support services.

➤ Interpretation and Discussion of Data

The research focuses on the experiences of children in four villages of Southern Kaduna through the poetics of confession and principles of personality. These villages include Magamiya II, Kurmin Masara, Gan Gora and Kan Kibori. Four children were interviewed in each of these areas. This study will, however, explore the experiences of four children in Magamiya II, three in Gan Gora, three in Kurmin Masara, and four in Kan Kibori. This is because they share experiences that enable the researchers to access the mental life and psychosocial conditions of the selected children using interview as research tool.

These children fall within the age bracket characterized in this study as children namely; Magamiya Respondent 1 (12), Magamiya Respondent 2 (12), Magamiya Respondent 3 (12) and Magamiya Respondent 4 (12); Gan Gora Respondent 1 (12), Gan Gora Respondent 2 (12), Gan Gora Respondent 3 (16); Kurmin Masara Respondent 1 (12), Kurmin Masara Respondent 2 (14), and Kurmin Masara Respondent 3 (12) and Kan Kibori Respondent 1 (14), Kan Kibori Respondent 2 (17), Kan Kibori Respondent 3 (17) and Kan Kibori Respondent 4 (16). It should, however, be noted that these children were three years younger when these events happened sometime in 2020/2021.

In their characterization of stages in human growth and development, Palanikumar and Avulakurita (2023) tag ages 12 – 18 as teenagers or Adolescence. The psychosocial development of children within this age, according to Ericson, is characterized by identity and role confusion (Palanikumar and Avulakurita, 2023). Owen (1993:530) characterizes this stage as a “time of turmoil and potential change – one that can have a corrective effect on a troubled personality, or exert a pathogenic influence on its own.” The study, therefore, illustrates the extent to which banditry can play a greater role in reshaping the personality of children. It is done to also demonstrate that the mental life of children can be reconditioned through harrowing activities of banditry. This is so, as Benton (1990:5) argues, largely because “part of our mental energy is, under normal conditions, conducted off by way of physical innervations and gives what we call *the expression of emotion*”. These emotions when imprisoned, “can undergo a series of abnormal changes” which, as Benton observes, can be “preserved as lasting charge and as a source of constant disturbance in psychical life” (Benton, 1990:5).

What further characterized the sampled population as children in our categorization is their level of education at the time of the attacks. This typology is important as it underscores their cross-cultural perception which, in itself, influences or limits ways in which they perceive themselves and those outside of their communities. Out of the 14 respondents, 2 are in Primary 4, 1 in Primary 5, 2 in Primary 6, 4 in JSS1, 1 in JSS 2, 2 in JSS3, 1 in SS 1, 1 finished secondary school, and 1 in Institution of Higher Learning. This shows that they are all within what, in Sullivan’s characterization of childhood in developmental psychology, is essential in understanding human behavior. Sullivan (1968:188) argues that receiving punishment within these age bracket “further the bad-me aspect of the self-system”. If, within this age, the child’s need for tenderness is met by “hostility”, as he points, “the bad-me component will eventually dominate the self-system”.

These children, as the data have shown, are victims of banditry. They have lost important personalities in their families, ranging from parents, relations and loved ones. Yet, as gathered from data collected, they have been neglected in the process of peace-building. Confession from Magamiya Respondent 1, for instance, indicates that he lost his uncle called “Baban Gadam” with all their houses burnt. Magamiya Respondent 2 lost his grandfather called “Adamu” and a relation called “Sidi”. Magamiya Respondent 3 lost a relation who was also set ablaze. Magamiya Respondent 4 lost his uncles called “Linus Joseph, Takai and Didam”. Gora Gan Respondent 1 lost his father called “Isreal Shakarau” and grandmother “Mama Shakarau” on the same day. Gora Gan Respondent 3 lost his father, “Joel” and his relation called “Fada”. Gora Gan Respondent 4 witnessed the killing of her father; Ishaku Dauda, her brother; Hosea aside other three kinsmen. Kurmin Masara Respondent 1 also lost his uncle; “Agibi Tauna”. Kurmin Masara Respondent 2 lost an uncle called “Tally”. Kurmin Masara Respondent 2 lost his brother called “Peter Reuben” whose throat was slit. Kan Kibori Respondent 1 also lost his father “Francis John” and a

relative; “Paul”. Kan Kibori Respondent 2 lost his father, aunty and cousin to these attacks. Kan Kibori Respondent 3 experienced the killing of his father, elder brother, grandfather and seven others. Kan Kibori Respondent 4 lost his brother “Gandu Tanko” and other relations “Alice Friday” alongside her child “Tansi Friday”.

Asked whether they received words of encouragement from older people, government representatives or elders of the communities, majority of the respondent pointed that they were not spoken to regarding their losses. Others say although promises were made to help them recover from the trauma or return them to school, none was fulfilled. As Sullivan (1968:214) maintains, children who experience this kind of neglect develop “malevolent transformation” which, he points, “results in the misguided belief that other people are hostile and unloving”. He captures it thus:

[The malevolent transformation] is perhaps the greatest disaster that [could happen] in the childhood phase of personality development ... [such a child learns] that it is highly disadvantageous to show any need for tender cooperation from the authoritative figures around him. [Instead] he shows ... the basic malevolent attitude, the attitude that one really lives among enemies ... this distortion, this malevolence ... runs something like this: once upon a time everything was lovely, but that was before I had to deal with people (Sullivan 1968:216).

What this means as we have seen it play out in this study, is that these children develop circumstantial mental shift or ‘malevolent transformation’. This shift not only create relational gap but also reconstructs their psychosocial behavior.

The confessions from these children, for instance, reveal a deep-seated dislike for those they have perceived as their enemies – both their killers and the government that have abandoned them. When asked if he had forgiven the killers of his uncle, Magamiya Respondent 1 maintains that although he has forgiven them he will have nothing to do with them. Magamiya Respondent 2 says whenever he sees the attackers of his relations he always remembers and feels like taking revenge. When asked if she could marry the perceived killer of her relations Magamiya Respondent 4 said no. When asked why she would not relate with them she responded by saying, “they killed my uncle and relatives”. Gan Gora Respondent 1, on the other hand said he would not take revenge but that he would not make friends with them either. Gan Gora Respondent 2 out rightly said he will not forgive the killing of his father. He goes on to say he will revenge if he has the opportunity to do so. Gan Gora Respondent 3 made a more revealing confession by stating that she will have nothing to do with them and that she will become a lawyer just to ensure she gives them “unfavorable judgment”. Kurmin Masara Respondent 1 and 2 go on to say they can forgive them but will never be friends with them. Kurmin Masara Respondent 3 also intones that he will revenge if he has the opportunity to do so. Kan Kibori Respondent 1 says he wishes to revenge at the slightest opportunity. Kan Kibori Respondent 2 was emphatic when he says he is sure he would

revenge either now or in the future. Kan Kibori Respondent 3 says he has forgiven but that it will be difficult to relate with these perceived killers. Kan Kibori Respondent 4 says he has forgiven them but it will take the future to decide if he can relate with them.

These confessions reveal that these children are hysterical. Benton (1952:4) maintains that hysteria is a mental process that is emotionally colored and corresponds to a far more intense emotional expression which can find outlet through new paths. Hystericals, he argues, remember painful experiences of distant past and are strongly affected by them. He maintains that people affected by such pathogenic traumata carry a fixated mental life which is practically a most significant characteristic of neurosis. Such people, to Horney, (1950:202) hardly ever develop a feeling of belonging, of “we”, but instead, a profound insecurity and vague apprehensiveness. For our population, these attacks have shaped their perception of people as “they” and “us” – it forges a strong sense of otherness that will play out in their relationship with people outside of their ethnic group.

This sense of otherness is further built particularly as most of these children were taken in and cared for by other relations living outside of the affected communities rather than government agencies such as State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) established to do so. Magamiya Respondent 1, for instance, was relocated to and lived in Madakiya, a settlement where his relations are and stayed for over a year. Magamiya Respondent 2 was taken to a settlement called “Bakin Kogi” where they stayed for approximately four months. Magamiya Respondent 3 was also taken to live with relations in Kaduna, the capital city of Kaduna State, Nigeria after their village was attacked and her relation killed. Magamiya Respondent 3 was also taken to Kaduna where she lived for two years while her sister was taken to Abuja. Gan Gora Respondent 2 was taken to Zonkwa, a nearby settlement where they stayed for five days. Gan Gora Respondent 3 and her relations left their village Angwan Bayaro and relocated to Gan Gora where they had no relation and are still settled to this moment. Kurmin Masara Respondent 1 was taken to Kaduna and lived there for three months. Kurmin Masara Respondent 3 was taken to Abuja to live with his uncle for three months. Kan Kibori Respondent 1 said they trekked through the bush to Kurmin Masara, a neighboring village where they stayed for a day.

What this means in displacement studies, is that these displaced children do not enjoy protection, which, in the context of refugee, includes “the principle of non-refoulement, the right ... to enjoy physical and legal security...as well as the right to return to their homeland in conditions of safety, and dignity” (UNHCR, 1997:14). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee recognizes the fact that the inability of “a country to protect the internally displaced and other victims of violence within their own country ...raises in a very direct manner the question of state sovereignty” (UNHCR1997:14). One of the children explained the failure of state apparatus such as the military to protect their lives when she was asked if they had reported these incidents to soldiers assigned in their areas thus: “these

soldiers, before they come they would have killed our people already”. When asked further if they did not show the soldiers those killing them when they eventually arrived she responded that “we did. But when they arrived they stopped at a point and never exchanged fire with them. They watched them run away. It was once they apprehended some...and we were told they were taken to Jos”. This kind of neglect is enough to weaken the sense of patriotism and imprint in children a hatred for nationhood.

The study further applies the principle of talking-cure which Benton (1952:3) calls “Chimney Cleansing, by allowing the respondents to vent out the remnant of emotions stored in their minds. This is done to provide the platform for cathartic treatment in a way that gives them the room to filter through their emotions stored up “as remnant, as precipitates, if you like, of affectively toned experiences” which, as Benton observes, could lead to “psychic traumata”. To achieve this, the respondents were, after expressing their experiences, asked how they feel. Gan Gora Respondent 1 says “I feel better because you have spoken to me and I feel encouraged”. Gan Gora Respondent 2 says “he feels pains”. Asked if such feeling was because he was reminded of what happened he says “yes” and while crying, said “they were murdering children, even children that were suckling. They only spared the female”. Responding to the same question, Gan Gora Respondent 3 says “I feel some relief now that I have shared my feeling. I am now encouraged and feel you could help me to return to school”. Responding more on this, Kurmin Masara Respondent 2 said “I feel happy” while Kurmin Masara Respondent 3 said “I feel good”. Still on this, Kan Kibori Respondent 1 said “I feel relieved, unburdened and light”.

Dr. Breuer uses this method to revive his patient, a girl of twenty-one, who developed a physical and mental disturbance after experiencing the sickness and death of her father (Benton, 1952: 4). He concluded from observation that people do not only remember the painful experiences of distant past as they are “still strongly affected by them”. So, he goes on to say, that these people produce memory symbols of their past experiences in a way that shape their “memory behavior” (Benton, :4). Hence, they encounter appropriate words and deeds that allows them to give vent to fixated thoughts and suppressed emotions, “they burst out with especial strength, as though it had been pent up all along” (Benton, 1952:4). Such was the experiences of our respondents: those that burst into tears and those who feel some form of relieve all reproduced emotions that show how they were able to play back the traumatic scenes of their experiences in a way that restores their mental life.

III. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study finds that children are neglected in the process of peace building in communities affected by banditry. This neglect as the study establishes reconditions their psychic life and psycho social behaviors. It recommends that children should be availed the opportunity to participate in the process of peace building to give them a sense of belonging.

It also finds that the struggle for land is one of the reasons for the rise and sustenance of banditry in Nigeria. It therefore, recommends that the Federal Government should prioritize the implementation of ranching to demarcate boundaries between farmers and herders. This will checkmate the activities of criminal elements killing people in the guise of herdsmen.

It further finds that Government and the political class are indifferent in efforts towards ending banditry in Nigeria. It recommends that government should show more commitment in controlling the proliferation of arms, creating of community policing and enshrining good governance. They should show concern about ending corruption, checkmating illegal mining and related activities and create employment opportunities.

In addition to these the study finds that the military is complicit in encouraging banditry. It recommends that the military should be encouraged with adequate weapon and better welfare that will boost their morale. Those found culpable for banditry should be dealt with according to relevant laws.

That Nigeria is breeding a generation of violent people due to the neglect of children affected by banditry. The Government and relevant agencies should focus on programs and interventions that will heal these children in ways that will see them integrated into society.

It finds that confession is a viable tool for unveiling the mental life and psychosocial behavior of children affected by banditry.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study provides data to demonstrate the relevance of engaging with children in ongoing efforts in curbing banditry in Nigeria. It establishes its gap on the scant attention given to confession as element of narratology which can serve as tool for understanding the experiences of children and how it can be utilized as therapeutic agency to both uncover the dangerous silences of affected children and to initiate the process of healing them. It uses the experiences of children from selected communities in Zangon-Kataf to present a far-reaching perspective that can be effective in curbing psychosocial disorder in children affected by banditry. This approach, it is hoped, would offer novel perspective especially to policy-makers in the ongoing efforts to correct the effect of insurgency in the country. Its insights, it is hoped, will provide viable template by which they could help children whose experiences can create both a sense of ambivalence and the tendencies of future aggression in the country.

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