



Domestic Violence, Parenting and Insecurity in Nigerian Society in Stan-Collins Ubaka's *a Cry of Innocence*



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Abstract

The scholarly exploration of the interface between literature and the menace of insecurity and terrorism in Nigeria has identified religious extremism and political disillusionment as the nery precursors of the insurgents and their nefarious activities. Yet, domestic violence as a primordial cause of Nigerian insecurity and terrorism lacks scholarly focus. This study fills that critical lacuna. Inspirations are drawn from Psychoanalysis and Marxism. Psychoanalysis allows for the investigation of characters unconscious motives and psyches, while Marxism advocates for socio-political harmony. Stan-Collins Ubaka's *The Cry of Innocence* will be the primary text this text will be subjected to critical textual analysis. It is discovered significantly that domestic violence in the text perpetuates the paranoid urge and tendency for terrorism and violent activities, the unscrupulous perpetration of all manners of child abuse exposes the victims to either unconscious or conscious form of violent behavior that may aggravate children and youth involvement in insecurity and terrorism. Therefore, curbing domestic violence is a quintessential strategy to combat the alarming spate of insecurity and terrorism in Nigeria.

Keywords: Domestic violence; Insecurity; Parenting; Socio-political harmony; Nigeria.

1. Introduction

The perennial, repugnant and superfluous spate of insecurity and terrorism in Nigeria has called for the need and attention of all and sundry in humanistic studies, especially writers and artistes to synergize resources and creative talents for the purpose of abating the scourge of these socio-political cankerworms. The ubiquitous and devastating effects of insecurity and terrorism should stimulate the literary elites to engage in critical and creative endeavors that will annihilate, inhibit and suppress this untoward surge and pandemic. Writers like Wole Soyinka in *Alapata Apata*, and Ahmed Yerima in *Vision in Heart of Stone* have depicted the poignant and repulsive effects of terrorism and insecurity in Nigeria and by extension African society. Their depictions are apt, timely and instructive however, there should be an aggressive intensification of efforts and artistic strategies that will forestall a lasting solution to this ignominious menace in both creative and critical engagements. The persistent occurrences of violent conflicts, insecurity and terrorism have consequentially paved way for socio-political and economic hiatus and stasis in every facet of the country, Nigeria.

There are various categories of violence that may aggravate or lead to a full-scale insecurity or terrorism, if they are left unbridled or unchecked. The neglect of some cultural norms and ethics can regrettably lead to abnormal behavior or code of conduct which in return become the catalysts that will trigger off uncontrollable violent acts. In this wise, parents and guardians are enjoined to embark on a vigorous didactic instructions and moral education for their wards and children as the first agents of socialization. The impartation of valuable norms and morals will complement the aesthetic efforts of the writers and artistes.

2. Literature Review

Historically, the genesis of violence, insecurity and terrorism in Nigeria could be traced to 1986 under the regime of Ibrahim Babaginda, the military president of Nigeria who orchestrated the enrolment of Nigeria, a secular

state into the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) as a member. This in return paves way for unhealthy tussles, insinuations and eruptions of violence by Northern Muslims against Southern Christians. The inclusion of Nigeria's membership in OIC further gives birth to the official operation of Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO). Since then, it appears that the country Nigeria has lost her grip as a secular state and the encroachment of unity and peace become tightened and emanated into violence created by religious and tribal divide and coloration.

Some of the extant critical views on the causes of violence, insecurity and terrorism have identified mismanagement of resources as the morbid cause of the incessant outbreak of violence. Hazen and Horner (2007) tag mismanagement-induced violence and insecurity as "paradox of plenty". They bemoan the aftermath of insecurity and terrorism in Nigeria, a country that is bountifully endowed with many natural resources as they argue that instead of a pleasant consummation of the endowed resources, considerable number of Nigerians wallow in extreme poverty, and in return, the crime rate shoots up and the security of lives and property are no longer guaranteed (27). The propensity of the paradox of plenty is further intensified through chasm of inequality, absence of fairness and justice and abysmal disconnect with the government and the governed. It is succinctly assertive as Nigerian political leaders are living extravagantly and ostentatiously in public places and they are impervious to the plights of the masses that live in squalors as paupers. From Hazen and Horner's paradox of plenty comes the expansive spread of the cankerous insecurity and terrorism. This view is obvious and its evidences are abounding in Nigeria contemporarily.

In 2009, Otis attributes religious indoctrination as the key factor in the destructive involvement in insecurity and terrorism. He sees religion as the unalloyed stimulation for the armed groups in the northern Nigeria. He opines that religion can be overestimated or underestimated, it is overestimated when it is assumed to have predictive capability – religion explains everything, it is underestimated when it is ignored or misunderstood (218). This view emphasizes the root cause of Boko Haram insurgents that have torn into pieces the cords of unity and association in the northern part of Nigeria. Apart from religious extremism identified by Nwagboso (2012) sees corruption as the bane of insecurity and terrorism. According to him, the avalanche of natural resources in Nigeria, without doubt, Nigeria should be labeled a rich country but the entrenched culture of corruption in public service has resulted in the dearth of basic amenities and necessities. The dearth of fundamental necessities has aroused violent resistances from the masses and this largely culminates in gruesome insecurity of lives and property.

In tandem with Nwagboso's view, Onifade (2013) pontificate the nature of the gruesome resistance and protest against the corrupt practices of Nigerian political elites. They opine:

The thirst for blood and the preference for violence in expressing pent-up frustration and disenchantment with the state, its citizens and national totems may be a pointer to the need to revive moral values and virtues within the socio-economic, political, religious and educational institutions in the country. Nigerian leaders, politicians and their amen corners must be forced to evince and uphold moral values and virtues in all their conducts (1).

This view identifies moral decadence and political elites' unscrupulous behaviors as the causes of the dehumanizing and destructive terrorism and violence that have consumed the peace and unity of the otherwise beautiful and serene Nigeria. It is glaring from this view that an endeavor whose aim is to instill moral uprightness and socio-political serenity to the country will be an efficacious elixir and must be kept at bay.

Aghedo and Eke (2013), paint unhealthy rivalry and competition between the northern and southern parts of Nigeria as the precursor of the widespread of terrorism and insecurity. In their opinion, there is an acute and recalcitrant competition for resources and privileges deposited in oil-rich region between the state and federal level of government. Similarly, there exists a protracted and unhealthy rivalry among the youths. The uneducated northern youths bear a strong animosity towards educated youth in the southern part of Nigeria. They often accuse the educated southern youths of being too sophisticated and domineering in the labor markets (113). The rivalry and competition also transcend to the political class as prominent political appointments and positions are often occupied by the northern politicians at the detriment of the southern politicians that come from the economic stronghold of the country. This view is tenable because favoritism and nepotism have been the distinguishing characteristic of the present government of Nigeria and to a very large extent, they have contributed immensely to the expansive magnitude of insecurity and terrorism. It is quite unfortunate and piteous that the political class is doing next to nothing positively to curb the insecurity and terrorism and their attendant socio-economic upheavals. Ewetan and Urhie (2014), express the skepticism that greets the non-challant and indecisive approach of the leaders, "the rising wave of insecurity has not been abated but has assumed a dangerous dimension which is threatening the corporate existence of the country as one geographical entity" (40).

Considering the recalcitrance of the perpetual perpetrators of insecurity and terrorism in contemporary Nigerian state, Odey (2012) investigates the historical survey of them. He discovers that ethnography and protracted military rules and misrules have tolled the country down the sinking train of religious and tribal divide. In congruence with religious and tribal colorations, Wunti and Moniruzzaman (2016) depict two trends in contemporary Nigerian insecurity and terrorism – the continuation, aggravation and proliferation of violent identity conflict, and the attempt to manage identity conflicts through innovative federalist practices. This view is genuine but not tenable because it appears that the measures put in place by the federal government are not innovative and adequate.

Consequently, the effects of insecurity and terrorism are too enormous and hard to bear by the affected communities and the nation at large. Is prognostic as he foresees an inevitable increase in food insecurity because of the incessant unbridled clash between farmers and herders in the Middle Belt of the country. The violent conflict in this area will ignite unbearable famine and starvation. He argues that the seemingly silence of the government over the violent conflict between pastoralists and farmers has seen substantial displacement of populations, livestock and farm produces. This view is corroborated by Onubogu (2017) who opines that the repeated clashes between nomadic

pastoralists and farming communities are the most pressing axes of violence in Nigeria. While tensions between these communities have a long history, the scale and frequency of violent outbreaks between the groups have recently risen threatening to inflame ethnic and religious antagonisms. The cold reaction from the present government is dearly worrisome and it portends doom and imminent collapse and disintegration of Nigeria. Mbachaga (2019), complements Raleigh and Onubogu in his angst over the looming collapse orchestrated by the insensitive responses of the government. He argues, regrettably political leaders engage in violence, insecurity and terrorism as political weapon to repel opposition and to coerce helpless masses to support and embrace their unwholesome rule (83).

Nwankpa and Michael (2021), sees bias and favoritism in the way the present government of Nigeria is handling the violent attacks and terrorism unleashed on some Nigerians as it further gives credence to the formation of Islamic agenda. He opines:

In Southeastern Nigeria, the military is clamping down on the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a group seeking the secession of the Igbo people from Nigeria. In Nigeria's central middle Belt states, herder-farmer crisis has expanded into Southern Nigeria and assumed a dangerous religious dimension as Southerners, who are mostly Christians, fear an encroaching Islamist threat that is much bigger than Boko Haram alone. (3)

This position is apt and tenable because Boko Haram insurgents and bandits in the Northern Nigeria are not declared as terrorist group and the government refused to proscribe them. To worsen the situation, Nigerian government is reintegrating and assimilating Boko Haram members into Nigerian Police and other security agents.

The indices of the imminent collapse of Nigeria are further heightened by the increase in the agitation for secession by people from eastern and western regions.

3. Statement of the Problem

Critical and scholarly explorations of the interface between literature and the menace of insecurity and terrorism in Nigeria usually identify religious extremism, ethnic sentiment, government ineptitude and disillusionment instituted by emergent neo-colonial Nigerian leaders as the causes of this unfortunate reality. Some critical opinions even ascribe political thuggery and inordinate ambition on the part of Nigerian leaders in the untoward insecurity and terrorism. Readings like this obviously fail to account for the role of exponential domestic violence in this development. The study, therefore, argues that the percolation of domestic violence in Nigerian homes actually influences people's inclination to terrorism and insecurity. Thus, an attempt to curtail domestic violence in Nigerian society will provide panacea to terrorism and insecurity. It is axiomatic that when the foundation is faulty (in crisis), what can the righteous do. The study will demonstrate how domestic violence acts as catalyzers of insecurity and how measures to prevent it will extensively help to combat the untoward contemporary insecurity and terrorism.

4. Methodology

Stan-Collin Ubaka's *Cry of Innocence* will be the primary text; it will be subjected to critical textual analysis in content and form. The research instrument shall be the library, both the conventional and the internet. Inspirations are drawn from Psychoanalyst conception of psyches and mindsets as signifiers of human actions and inactions. Moreover, in engendering domestic violence, references will be made to aesthetic of protests in the text, using insights from Marxist theory to undergird the analysis.

5. Analysis. Finding

Before textual engagement, it is expedient to situate the textual content of the primary text. The brief synopsis of the text reveals the horrific situations many innocent children go through. Ijeoma, a thirteen years old teenager is falsely accused of being a witch in a society where it is a curse to be one. This accusation is heralded by her mother who is deceived by her neighbor, Adaugo in order to protect the daughter of his dear friend, Okeke whose daughter bears the same name, Ijeoma. The parent of the innocent Ijeoma ostracizes her with their nasty and rash reaction to the falsehood. The innocent Ijeoma suffers series of poignant child abuses from her once beloved mother, father, neighbours, friends and even strangers as a result of the false accusation. When the suffering, wickedness and humiliation she receives become unbearable, she becomes resolute and strongly decides to take the bull by the horns in order to defend her faith and dignity. At the end, the cobwebs of falsehood are removed and Ijeoma, the protagonist forgives her parent and she reluctantly returns home. Will she ever regain her reputation and innocence?

Having seen the ordeal and the plight of the protagonist in above synoptic narration of the novel, it is imperative to examine the undeserved child abuses and humiliations a teenager (Ijeoma, the protagonist) experiences because of the failure of her parent. The parent has failed in performing their parental responsibility of loving and caring for the children. They fail to verify keenly an intricate matter and resolve to dehumanize their own daughter in order to pay the societal yearning. The thrust of the analysis is to condemn Ijeoma's parents and by extension, all Nigerian parents not to be too rash and nasty when dealing with their children. The opening of the novel depicts the eluded peace and love that characterize Ijeoma's home before her mother's rash, nasty and unmotherly reactions to an unverified accusation of her daughter being accused a witch. Ijeoma narrates her ordeal:

"Mum, believe me. I don't even know how it feels to be a witch." "Wait, I'll show." Mum stood up and walked toward me. My instinct did not prepare me for what came next: the caustic sting of a slap on my left cheek. Another heavy blow landed on my head and then on my back and stomach. "You must tell me the truth. You must tell me the truth. I'm your mother," Mum chanted as she unleashed terror on my body. I ducked to escape the cascading blows. My head hit the doorknob in the process, and I fell back, hitting my buttocks on the floor. Mum bent forward to trap me on the floor, but she moved too late. I dashed outside immediately. My eyes were overflowing with tears at this

point. I felt a sharp pain on my head and realized there was a smelling. Then it gave way: the sob I had been fighting for so long to keep from exploding. I wailed uncontrollably and angrily. I felt wetness around my lower region and realized I had wet myself. Mum's voice riveted the entire compound. "If you're not ready to say the truth, don't come into this house." (10-11)

It is glaring that Ijeoma's mother is motherly deficient by her rash and bully behavior over a well unverified accusation. This is purely a violent child abuse and cruel domestic violence that is capable of unleashing both mental and emotional damages to the personality of the sufferer. When there is a mental and emotional fracture in the cord that links a child to the mother, there will be love lost, and this will further escalate the urge of hatred for the mother and aggressive living within the neighborhood where the child lives. To rear a child with high utilitarian values in characters and morals, such a child should not grow in an environment depicted above.

The father also complements the obnoxious behavior of the mother. He should have a bit of sense, being the head of the family, instead he becomes nastier than his wife over a trivial issue. He refuses to exercise patience and wisdom in handling children's matters. He angrily throws the treasurable basin of peace, love and unity in his home into the ocean of foolishness. He allows violence to be domesticated in his home at the altar of sheer ignorance and hasty decision. A father that ought to have been a loving father has turned to a terrorist with his daughter as he inflicts mental and physical injuries to Ijeoma who is merely accused of being a witch. It is worthy to note that the accusation does not demand the high level of brutality from a father as she narrates her father's brutal reaction:

When I raised my eyes, Dad was already on his feet with his right hand raised. Now I was in big trouble! I collapsed on my knees. "Dad, please, I'm innocent. I know nothing about witches!" I cried. My wailing and pleading fell off on deaf ears. Dad muttered something about witches being stubborn until they were beaten. He dragged me by my shirt, making me fall face down to the ground. And then I felt a heavy weight on my back. Dad imprisoned me in between his legs. I tried to shake free of him but it was a feeble attempt. (19)

These physical tortures from a father to a daughter who has not committed a heinous crime are eccentrically barbaric. The savagery and barbarity of this behavior portray Ijeoma's father as extremely wicked father. His refusal to apply wisdom to verify the authenticity of the false accusation is equally portraying naivety. His failure to tactically handle the matter shows his innate weakness and readiness to prefer violence as a means of unraveling mystery or crisis. In a saner clime, consultation and dialogue are applied to resolve intricate issues, Ijeoma's dad is portrayed aesthetically by the novelist as a crude savage whose crudity nearly allows him to kill his daughter in order to please a vainglorious society. Our concern is that the demeaning and dehumanizing behavior of Ijeoma's father is absolutely sinister and it is capable of instilling an innocent person into a world of crime. Rearing a child in this manner portends serious danger in future. Parenting a child in a house domesticated with fury, anger, crudity, barbarism and thorough brutality is tantamount to training a child for an international wrestling competition. In this wise, an iota of kindness, humanity and love will be wanting in the life of the child. Consequently, the child will become a bully adult and peradventure, he becomes a social misfit and a terrorist. However, if Ijeoma's parent has wisely taken the path of consultation and dialogue, the truth of false accusation will be unveiled without any infliction of physical and mental injuries to a beautiful and promising Ijeoma who is always leading in academic exercises in her class.

This is a great lesson to contemporary Nigerian parents to always apply intensive reasoning when dealing with their children in a century that is full of criminalities. Again, parent should avoid rash behavior and decision, they should always be cautious in their spontaneous reaction to unverified trending news around their children and other beloved ones. It is a pity that Ijeoma's parent callously treats her as an outcast, whereas she deserves a loving and befitting care from her parent. Ijeoma has unpalatable and nightmarish experience at night as an outcast at age thirteen. She pathetically narrates her night experience and mental trauma:

Although it had seemed so long in coming, evening finally fell. The sun had strolled away, and the gentle breeze cooled the earth. The different sounds from different nocturnal insects filled the small bush just behind our compound, where I hid myself. I felt the sting of a nagging hunger tearing my intestine. I yawned so hard, I thought my jaws would drop, but sleep refused to come. I began to feel bad about life. I wondered in utter amazement at how a family yoked together in love and togetherness could be this fragmented, and within so short a time! We had suddenly become a disunited family! Dad and Mum were on one side, totally against me, while Ikechukwu and Okwukwe were confused about what to do and who to follow. They were given standing orders not to mingle with me to avoid being initiated into witchcraft or even being harmed. (21).

Since the protagonist has experienced a lonely, harsh and traumatic night as depicted above, it is succinctly adduced that nothing can be threatening again to this young teenager. Her parent's crude and unwise behavior has metamorphosed her from a cool and loving child to a firm resolute and carefree character. Her parent her given her a leeway to waywardness, social misfit and moral decadence. At this juncture, all the good morals, the protagonist might have imbibed before will begin to dwindle in her mind and an incriminating thought of assault, brutality, anger, vengeance, etc. will occupy her inner mind. If these thoughts are unchecked, she will suddenly become a community rascal whose rascality may escalate to a full blown terrorism. Moreover, the rash and unintelligent behavior of the protagonist's parent no doubt has brought an excruciating mental and physical sufferings to her. These sufferings are capable of turning a promising child to live a life of a malignant and malevolent recluse that may lead to life of underworld.

The unfathomable transformation from a peaceful, vivacious and promising member of society to a rascal and bully; from a conformist to a defiant, the protagonist displays is aptly the fallout of the behavioral mistake of her parent. It is also an imperative signal that human beings are prone to change and a change from negativity to positivity should be clamored for not vice-versa. In the text, shortly after the dehumanizing treatment that is unleashed on Ijeoma, she becomes stiffly resolute to defend her reputation even at the slightest opportunity. She

finds it very difficult now to tolerate or condone any insult. So, when a playmate arrogantly addresses her as a witch she quickly ignores societal norms that warn against public assault or juvenile battery as she violently reacts:

I knew all she wanted to do is to call me a witch. That was her game plan all along. But I would not take it lightly with her. She had bitten off more than she could chew. Before long, tears were already falling on my cheeks uncontrollably. I allowed the memories of my predicament to take over me, and I realized how much harm Dad and Mum had done to me and my reputation. My heart ached so badly that I vented all that anger on Onyinye by descending on her. "You'll tell me who's a witch; you'll tell me today ..." I kept saying, as I pumped blows on her face. I then scooped a good measure of sand and stuffed it into her mouth (24-25).

This is the disruptive aftermath of misguided and crude behavior of Ijeoma's parent on the day she is falsely accused of being a witch.

Another grievous evil the crudity and rash behavior of Ijeoma does to the protagonist is stigmatization. Her parent has externalized the false accusation of being a witch and since then, every Tom, Dick and Harry addresses her as such. She has been given an identity that is never hers. Psychologically, stigmatization damages the entire life of the stigmatized; it causes introversion to the sufferer and is capable of mental and physical destruction. There are many occasions when Ijeoma will be stigmatized as witch, even from people she trusted. This gives her an intensive mental torture that may eventually make her become obstinate and impervious to the ideal virtues and values. In her wandering days, she meets a food vendor who appears to be a sent angel to her plight but immediately she hears about the false accusation, she (food vendor) suddenly turns to a callous person as she arranges for her arrest and detention at the police station (45). A similar occasion occurs when her school mother, Sister Helen extends kindness to her but her husband detests harboring a 'witch' and he cajoles her wife to believe that the presence of Ijeoma will wreak havoc and even has started wreaking havoc. Then, Sister Helen behaves shockingly. Ijeoma narrates her shocking action:

She grabbed my arm and pushed me toward the door. "I am sorry, but you will have to leave my house. I just woke up from a terrible nightmare, which is very unusual with me. In addition to that, Isioma has fallen critically ill. I don't believe all of this is a coincidence. Why is this all happening since you set foot into this house? I was going to wait until the morning before taking you home. But I'm afraid some other terrible thing might happen if we continue to keep you. Again, I am sorry, you have to leave now." ... "I still can't believe you could try to harm my family after the kindness I showed you by bailing you out of jail. It is often said that it is the person a witch knows that they kill. I beg you, don't kill my daughter." (54)

It suffices to say from the excerpt that stigmatization is destructive and incurable. If the sufferer survives it will leave an indelible scar. It is dangerous for parents to allow their children to have an experience of stigmatization like the protagonist, Ijeoma. It is important to know that stigmatization can lead to suicide. This is evident in the novel, after Ijeoma's father ostracizes her, she begins to run from pillar to post abortively to redeem her reputation, the more she tries, the more she falls into cruel and callous hands. After leaving Sister Helen, she falls into the hands of bandits who nearly raped or killed her if not for the timely intervention of patrol policemen (57). Thereafter, she reminisces about her lost reputation and the eluding peace of mind she decides to seek permanent solace in suicide. Another instinct prevents her from committing suicide as she firmly resolves to battle indignities and injustices to prove her innocence.

As providence will have it, Father Dibia, a Catholic Priest eventually rescues the protagonist from her traumas. After the rescue she vows not to see her parent again in spite of the pleading from Father Dibia. This is a heart that has been broken, wounded and dissipated by people that ought to have adored and adorned it. She disdainfully frowns at the mention of her parent's name or at the thought of returning to them. Her firm determination not to see her parent is echoed in her statement below:

I was almost consumed by sorrow when he said we would go and see your parents, because I did not want to see them. I began to conjure up images of the horrors awaiting me at home: Mum's ever frowning face, Dad's dangerous silence, the gulf of loneliness that would consume me, and many other ills. The bond I once shared with Dad and Mum was dead and gone ... for life! "I'm no longer interested in anything concerning them. They are not my parents." (86).

As it is seen above, when humiliation, stigmatization, suffering and abuse are unbearable, a cool person may suddenly become a crook and very unruly. This is the exact case of the protagonist. The false accusation she receives, her parent's crudity and callous treatment and the attendant stigmatization have stiffened her to be obstinately rude and defiant to societal norms. Her defiant and unruly behaviors, if unchecked, may escalate to catalysts for insecurity and terrorism.

6. Conclusion

Imperatively, parents are advised to shun any form of child abuse and domestic violence because their repercussion is often enormously devastating and disruptive as it axiomatic that it requires less effort to destroy than to rebuild. Though, the protagonist reconciles with her parent when the truth has been established that she is not a witch, the scar is still indelible in her heart. She bemoans and berates her parent's lack profound love in handling an intricate issue. To curb the menace of insecurity and terrorism in contemporary Nigeria, issue of domestic violence and child abuse must be abhorred by parents because children from homes where domestic violence and child abuse are prevalent always have the tendency of behaving badly in future.

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