Beyond Ideology

Examining the Variation in Number of Female Members in Local Jihadist Groups
in Nigeria 2002-2018

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Abstract

Why does one jihadist group have more female members than other jihadist groups? Jihadist groups in one sense are the rebel groups that adopt Islamist ideologies. Scholarship in rebel groups have mostly compared female participation across different rebel groups, ideologies, and countries within a certain time period. These studies have proven that rebel groups that espouse Islamist ideologies are having less female participation compared to left-wing rebel groups. Yet, such findings still lack in-depth examination on why one jihadist group appears to have more female members than the other jihadist groups. In order to understand the factors that affect the variation in the number of female members in jihadist groups, I compare two local splinter groups of Boko Haram in Nigeria, *Jama'tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad* (JAS) and Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP). As a point of departure, I use existing datasets from Women in Armed Rebellion Dataset (WARD) and Global Extremism Monitor (GEM), and collect qualitative data, such as female members' testimonies – drawn from both primary and secondary sources. Coupled with various studies on women's participation and recruitment into rebel groups, I examine several individual and group level factors that can affect the different numbers of female members in jihadist groups, particularly in JAS and ISWAP. This thesis concludes that group level factors have a significant impact in determining the number of female members in both JAS and ISWAP.

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This is not a perfect piece, I know. But I have a life and other exiting challenges await me out there. To my fellow students, *a good thesis is a done thesis.* So, do not let your thesis stop you from achieving your goals in life. Keep pushing and believe in yourself. This too shall pass.

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1   Introduction

Why does one jihadist group have more female members than other jihadist groups?

Generally speaking, women have taken part in various forms of rebellions for ages. Over the last decade, political science scholars have provided studies on women's involvement in rebel groups. The active participation of women yields an urgency to inquire why women participate in rebel groups that are considered to be a male-dominated environment. Thus, most existing scholarship on women in rebel groups have greatly focused on the individual level analysis to identify and discuss how women are radicalized, what factors drive women to participate in a rebel group, and why these factors differ from their male counterparts (Bloom, 2011; Viterna, 2013; Henshaw, 2016; Pearson & Winterbotham, 2017). The individual level analysis employed various gender approaches ranging from psychological to milieu approach (Bloom, 2011; Pearson & Winterbotham, 2017). Hence, these studies have provided a comprehensive explanation of the factors that propel women to join rebel groups.

Further studies on women's participation in rebel groups have generated extensive analyses that focused on the group level. These studies focus on the questions of why do rebel groups recruit women and to what extent they employ them in as combatants. Such studies have advanced the analyses from individual level to group level (Thomas & Bond, 2015; Henshaw, 2016; Wood & Thomas, 2017; Wood, 2019; Thomas, 2021). These scholarships have conducted comparative large-*n* studies and have generated datasets in order to find a pattern of which rebel groups recruit women and employ them as fighters. These studies have covered large numbers of active rebel organizations within a certain period. For instance, Henshaw conducted cross-sectional work on women's involvement in seventy-two active rebel groups between 1990 and 2008 (Henshaw, 2016). Her research aimed to answer why do some groups appear to attract such large numbers of female fighters, while others appear to attract almost none. Henshaw found that although forced recruitment is a reality for some rebel groups that include women, most of them do so on a voluntary basis (Henshaw, 2016). In addition to that finding, there is clearly an advantage for rebel groups to recruit women, especially in employing them as female combatants by taking advantage

of the stereotype that women could provide tactical benefits to rebel organizations (Thomas, 2021, pp. 771-772).

Despite the major improvement in the research, scholars draw less attention to conduct comparative analysis on gender aspects of the rebel armed groups within similar ideologies. In particular, little comparative discussion has been given to the variation of female members in Islamist rebel groups, especially to the local based groups, e.g., Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, Hamas, Abu Sayyaf Group, Jemaah Islamiyah, etc. It has been proven that political ideology adopted by the group plays a significant role in determining the extent of women's participation, particularly regarding their deployment in combat roles (Wood & Thomas, 2017). That said, rebel groups that espouse Islamist ideologies have less female participation and are less likely to employ female fighters compared to left-wing rebel groups (Wood & Thomas, 2017, pp. 36; Wood, 2019). A particular reason for that is because leftist ideologies propose women's equality and liberation that see patriarchy as the key source of women's oppression, which is different to what Islamist rebel groups stand for (Goldstein, 1980, pp. 330-331; Wood & Thomas, 2017, pp.34-36). With that in mind, comparing rebel groups that adopted different ideological beliefs is not an apple-to-apple comparison. Ultimately, a closer comparative investigation of the female members in local based Islamist rebel groups is required to offer scholars, practitioners, and policymakers a greater understanding on (1) the factors of the different numbers of female members across the Islamist groups, (2) diverse interpretation on gender aspect across the Islamist groups, and (3) the different nature of the groups' operations.

Therefore, this study began with the hope of covering this gap, as best one can, to support further research and localized comparative studies of female membership in Islamist rebel groups. I, therefore, ask:

Why does one jihadist group have more female members than other jihadist groups[1]?

In order to answer the research question, this thesis functions as a bridge by analyzing the factors that might explain the variation in numbers of female members in one jihadist group over the other. With that being said, I aimed to examine a set number of explanatory variables that may

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[1] My research question is specified to jihadist groups because it can be approached as a particular group of insurgent actors in rebel groups, particularly Islamist rebel groups. I further explain this in section 1.1.1

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impact the variation in the number of female members in jihadist groups, not to identify which jihadist group has more female members.

I examined my research question by employing a paired comparative analysis with the most similar method – in the context of Boko Haram splinter groups, *Jama'tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad* (JAS) and Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), between 2002 and 2018. Here, I take into account the existing datasets that covered the element of female members in Boko Haram factions from Women in Armed Rebellion Dataset (WARD) (Wood & Thomas, 2019) and Tony Blair Institute's Global Extremism Monitor (GEM) (Institute for Global Change, 2018) as a point of departure to compare the two factions. In addition to the exiting datasets, I systematically collected both primary and secondary data. For the primary data, I relied on mass news reports from verified media outlets, online archive sources, and international organizations that conducted field research and interview for their publications, such as Amnesty International and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). I further gathered data from existing scholarly publications, and journals as the secondary sources.

To further analyze, I combined a myriad of studies on women's participation and recruitment into rebel groups. Based on the analysis, I posit that there are individual and group level factors that can affect the different numbers of female members in jihadist groups, particularly in JAS and ISWAP. Nonetheless, I found evidence that group level factors have a significant impact in determining the number of female members in both JAS and ISWAP.

What follows in this introductory chapter are two things. Firstly, I will briefly explain the key terms that are used in this thesis, jihadism, and Boko Haram, as well as the conceptualization of female members according to this thesis. Secondly, I will present the structure and outline of the thesis.

1.1 Key Terms

1.1.1 Jihadism and Boko Haram

As this thesis discussed about jihadist groups, it is therefore essential to define first what jihadism is in general. The terms 'jihadism' and 'jihadist' refer to Sunni Muslim militant ideologies and movements that aimed at defending Muslim territories, establishing the Caliphate and Islamic Emirates (Nesser, 2011, p. 174). During the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan in the 1980s, Jihadism

emerged as an internationally oriented movement among Arab volunteers (Nesser, 2011, p. 174). The idea of jihadism further mixed with the Saudi brand of Salafism which then evolved into "Salafist-jihadist" movement.

Salafism itself is a movement within Sunni Islam that seeks to isolate Islam from outside influences (Afolabi & Yusuf, 2019, p. 74). Salafist Jihadism is one specific interpretation of Salafism that emphasizes violence to bring about radical change (Afolabi & Yusuf, 2019, p. 74). It is indisputable that Salafism is a fundamentalist ideology which promotes non-coexistence with other religions. Petter Nesser (2011) distinguished Salafist-jihadism into two categories based on its political rationales: classical and global jihad. First, the 'classical jihad' is the armed struggle that is undertaken to overthrow regimes, including Muslim regimes, and establish Islamic states, as well as the armed struggle against non-Muslims in Islamic territory (Nesser, 2011, p. 175). Meanwhile, the 'global jihad' is indented to deter Western interference in Muslim countries, not only through military and economic interreference but also, through cultural influences (Nesser, 2011, p. 175).

Scholars can use many approaches when discussing about jihadist groups or violent Islamists. First, jihadist groups can be seen as terrorist groups as they have used terrorist tactics (Kalyvas, 2018, p. 36). On another case, violent Islamists or the jihadist groups themselves have also taken part in insurgencies, such as in a rebellion or civil war (Kalyvas, 2018, p. 36). Moreover, Kalyvas argued that due to the confusion around 'terms' (terrorism, insurgency, civil wars, and so on), jihadist groups are often subsumed under terrorism, or even conflated as somehow equal or interchangeable (Kalyvas, 2018). In addition, although jihadist groups share an ideology that is deeply rooted in religion, they also act in ways similar to nonreligious rebel groups (Kalyvas, 2018; Wood & Thomas, 2017). Thus, I argue that jihadist group in this thesis is categorized as a particular group of insurgent actors in rebel groups, particularly Islamist rebel groups.

Now, this thesis is discussing about Boko Haram in which I refer as the umbrella of Salafi-jihadist groups in Nigeria. Boko Haram consists of three splinter groups that includes *Jama'tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad* (JAS), *Jamaat Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan* (Ansaru), and Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP). In this thesis, I argue that the political rationales of Boko Haram as Salafi-jihadist group do not fit into Petter Nesser's categorization. According to this study, I believe that the political rationales of Boko Haram are as follows: (1) establish an Islamic State, (2) wage jihad against Nigerian government and non-Muslims, and (3)

go against Western education and culture (Zenn, 2020). Thus, Boko Haram began its movement by proselytizing, attacking churches, non-Muslims, and public institutions which has led to the group being classified as an extremist jihadist group in Nigeria. I will discuss about Boko Haram explicitly in chapter 4.

1.1.2 Conceptualizing "Female Members"

When referring to "female" members, I do not distinguish between women and girls for two reasons. First, many sources indicate both women and girls as *female members* without explicitly distinguish them. Second, the effect of having women or girls in a group is rather more apparent in the politics of age-based participation (i.e., adult versus child soldier) than in the politics of gendered participation (Thomas & Bond, 2015, p. 492).

To further conceptualize "female members", it is important to note that female members in rebel armed groups often occupy multiple roles that blend combat and non-combatant activities consequently, it is difficult to delineate their specific roles. Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs which are sponsored by the UN Women differentiate female combatants from women associated with rebel groups (non-combatant) as follows (Goetz, 2012, pp. 23-24):

(a) Female combatants: Women and girls who participated in armed conflicts as active combatants using arms.

(b) Female supporters/associated with armed forces and groups: Women and girls who participated in armed conflicts in supportive roles/non-combatant roles, whether coerced or voluntarily. These women and girls are economically and socially dependent on the armed force or group for their income and social support. Examples: porters, cooks, nurses, spies, administrators, translators, radio operators, medical assistants, public information workers, camp leaders, or women/girls used for sexual exploitation.

Therefore, in this thesis, I conceptualized female members as women and girls who involved in any active role(s), both combatant and non-combatant roles, in the groups. In this thesis I discuss about women hence, I categorize it by gender. With that, I take no account of "rank" and "age" of the members in the discussion of this thesis.

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

In this chapter, I have outlined the following. First, I introduced the general idea of the study and why I chose the topic. Second, I have explained about jihadism and Boko Haram, as the key terms, that are mostly mentioned in this thesis. While in this section, I will present the general structure of the rest of the thesis.

In the second chapter, I will build the theoretical framework. To do so, I divided the chapter into two sections. In the first section, I will explore various literature review that addressed individual and group level analysis on the explanatory factors of why women are radicalized and recruited into the rebel groups. Based on the literature review, the second section will incorporate studies from individual and group level analysis to build a theoretical framework which analyses the explanatory factors that affect the variation in female membership in jihadist groups.

In the third chapter, I will cover the research design and methodology that are used in this thesis. There, I will elaborate and justify the reason I chose paired comparison and what strategy or method I needed to utilize for my case study comparison. I will explain about the case selection in detail, i.e., why, and how I chose Boko Haram splinter groups. Following that, I will elaborate the data and sources that are used in this thesis. Lastly, I discuss the challenges and pitfalls of this thesis research design.

In the fourth chapter, I will discuss about the case study in-depth, talking about Boko Haram in general, how the group split into three factions, and the discussion of JAS and ISWAP, including their ideologies, operational tactics, strategies, and the instrumentalization of women in each group.

The fifth chapter contains the discussion part, split into two sections. The first section is about analysis and findings. In this section, I will conduct the comparative analysis based on the case study, divided into two discussions. First, I examine three factors from the individual level in which I discuss how the motivation of women to join JAS and ISWAP is diverse. Second, I examine three distinct group level factors that affect the different numbers of female members in JAS and ISWAP. In the analysis, even though factors from both individual and group level affect the variation in the number of female members in JAS and ISWAP, I find that group level factors play key roles in determining the number of female members inside the groups. In the second section of this chapter, I address the limitation of this thesis and recommend further research based on the study.

The sixth and last chapter is the conclusion, where I summarize all the discussion of this thesis in a simpler manner.

2   Theoretical Framework

Explanatory Factors of the Variation of Female Members in Jihadist Groups

2.1 Literature Review

This thesis notes the urgency to explore several debates on the explanatory factors of why women are radicalized or recruited into the rebel groups. In addition, the literature review will help to understand the factors of why women choose one rebel group over the other. In this section, I will point out two distinct levels of analysis in examining female members and participation in rebel groups. First, I will focus on the individual factors of female participation in rebel groups. Secondly, I will talk about recruiting and involving women into rebel groups according to group factors. Therefore, this literature review is the point of departure for the discussion in this study.

2.1.1 Individual Level Factors of Women's Participation in Rebel Groups

Why do women join armed groups? Why do they choose violence? These are the most fundamental research questions and many scholars have attempted to answer these questions by offering different approaches to analyze the motivations or factors of why women take up arms and join armed groups.

In the study of women's mobilization into the Salvadorian guerilla army, Viterna argues about the *pull, push, and persuade* factors that lead the rural Salvadorians involved in the FMLN guerilla army. She identified three distinct mobilization patterns, (1) politicized guerilas were *pulled* into guerrilla participation by their strongly held beliefs in the political causes of the FMLN; (2) Recruited guerrillas lived in a refugee camp or a repopulated community were *persuaded* to join the movement, (3) reluctant guerrillas were *pushed* into the guerrilla camps because they did not have resources to escape a crisis by any other means (Viterna, 2006). Moreover, in her later study found that *push* factors are the primary reasons for women joining armed groups rather than the *pull* factors (Viterna, 2013). The *push* factors are threats to family or community, internal displacement, and a general climate of government repression in the community. While the *pull* factors refer to the prior participation in political groups focused on economic and political issues (Viterna, 2013). In a similar vein, the concept of greed and grievance explains that women are

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more likely to join groups that advocate redress for economic grievances, and they are more likely to participate as supporters in groups focused on ethnic or religious grievances (Henshaw, 2016, p. 205).

Narrowing down to women in jihadist groups, a study on understanding women's role in Boko Haram by Ola suggested that many women simply join armed groups as a way of gaining some protection from brutal and unforgiving armies, which is related to what Viterna referred as *reluctant guerrillas* (Ola T. , 2020, p. 7). In a psychological perspective, Mia Bloom discussed the various reasons why women might choose terror on her book *Bombshell*, and found that there are five recurring explanations to her question or 'the five Rs': (1) *Revenge* for the death of close family members, (2) *Redemption* for the past sin and see martyrdom as an attractive option, (3) *Relationship* with a known insurgent or jihadi, (4) seeking for *Respect* in the community to show that women are as dedicated and committed to the cause as men, (5) *Rape* that has been used to coerce women to participate in combat thus, those who have been raped are essentially involuntary recruits (Bloom, 2011).

While Bloom focuses on psychological motives, Gowrinathan in her book *Radicalizing Her,* criticized the West's response to the female fighter, revealing the array of factors that have pushed women into battle, as well as the personal and political factors that have driven this decision (Gowrinathan, 2021). She countered Bloom's research that women joining armed groups is not necessarily psychological, but also due to the socioeconomic circumstances or the condition of a country, e.g., in a state of war or state repression – and her argument corresponds to Viterna regarding the *push and pull factors* (Gowrinathan, 2021). Therefore, she believed that there are several factors that may push women to take up arms and judging on psychological factors could be the bias of Western view on women, especially in the third-world countries. Historically, the discussion of female fighters has been omitted from narratives on gender and power. This has been counterproductive and antifeminist, according to Gowrinathan. Gowrinathan criticized that the current political discourse divides society into two camps: understanding the motivations to fight is interpreted as condoning violence, and defending oppressive agendas is a moral obligation (Gowrinathan, 2021).

While these studies have contributed to build an understanding on why women join rebel groups, I second Gowrinathan's argument that women who choose violence should be understood in a more nuanced and comprehensive way. With that in mind, I found that *pull, push,* and

persuaded factors should be applied in this thesis to identify the individual factors that influence women to join one jihadist group over the others. Guided by these existing studies, I posit that women participate in jihadist groups not only by being forced into them, but they might have their own motivations, for example, socioeconomic reasons.

It is worth noting that even though there is a large number of women who want to join the rebel groups, the decision of how many women that will be recruited depends on the groups. Hence, I argue that by relying on these scholarships alone is not sufficient to answer the research question of this thesis: *why does one jihadist group have more female members than other jihadist groups?* Therefore, it is important for this thesis to develop an understanding of the individual level factors that induce women to join either JAS or ISWAP, coupled with the group's explanatory factors, as will be discussed in the following section.

2.1.2 Recruiting and Involving Women into Rebel Groups

In stark contrast to the previous scholarship, the second literature is regarding group specific questions of *why do women join certain rebel groups more frequently than others? How and why does women's involvement vary across organizations? Why do rebel groups recruit women?*

A recent study on women's participation in violent political organizations (VPO) analyzes the variation of women's involvement across different violent political organization in 19 African countries from 1950-2011 (Thomas & Bond, 2015). This study argued that forced recruitment and secessionist aims emerged as strong predictors of women's overall participation hence, violent organizations that use coercive recruitment are much more likely to have women participants than groups that rely on volunteers, as are those that mobilize for withdrawal from the state (Thomas & Bond, 2015). Based on a study of women's involvement in seventy-two active insurgencies from 1990-2008 conducted by Henshaw, contrasting such findings. According to her data, most of the armed groups in which women are active appears to be voluntary in nature, especially if the group itself has a clear ideology and political goals (Henshaw, 2016).

In order to explain the variations in the prevalence of female combatants in the rebel groups, Wood identified two factors of groups' demand for female combatants that could explain such variations: (1) conflict severity and resource constraints, and (2) group political ideology (Wood, 2019, p. 77). There is a link between the demand for women combatants, the severity of

conflict and the acute need of troops due to intense period of fighting, which has made women become the last resort for the groups. First, in order to achieve broad political and military goals, rebel groups require significant inputs of both human and material resources. As a result, the failure to sustain both aspects might increase the likelihood of rebel failure and defeat (Wood, 2019, p. 77). Therefore, as the groups would experience the severe manpower shortages, they might recruit women into the organization whether voluntarily or forcibly.

In this case, leadership in the groups have direct impact on the dilemma of recruiting women as there would be trade-off between expected resource gains and potential costs. Therefore, the presence of women depends on the groups' leaders' perceptions, i.e., to what extend the leaders are willing to employ women and which leaders are sensitive to the potential cost of employing female combatants. In other words, although there is a significant supply of women who are willing to get involved in high-risk action, rebel leaders are the ones who determine how many women they will recruit into the groups and whether they will train, equip, and deploy them in combat (Wood, 2019, p. 98).

The second factor is the groups' political ideology in which the costs of recruiting women into rebel groups is derived from the beliefs, values, and norms of the leaders or groups (Wood, 2019, p. 81). In addition to this, Wood, and Thomas on their research on group's ideology and women's participation shed a light on different ideologies of extremist groups which also mentioned that the role of ideology changes over time (Wood & Thomas, 2017). For instance, Islamist insurgencies have increasingly allowed women to participate in non-traditional role. Moreover, the insurgent groups espousing radical Islamist ideologies, particularly those affiliated with Al-Qaeda, are most likely to engage in suicide attacks (Wood & Thomas, 2017, p. 33).

On the contrary, Kalyvas on his study supports Henshaw's research that women's participation in non-state armed groups appears to be voluntarily in nature if the group has a clear political ideology. He reiterates that ideology is necessary in producing popular support and mobilization, however, it would never be sufficient (Kalyvas, 2015, p. 44). There are three alternative explanations on how the armed groups could manage to obtain the consent and support of the population: (1) establish and provide the public good in areas where anarchy disrupted livelihoods, (2) police a territory effectively and identify and punish defectors and reward supporters, and (3) effectively govern a territory and supply the local population with public goods and governance, thus establishing itself as the *de facto* rulers (Kalyvas, 2015).

The aforementioned scholarships have indeed contributed massively to the research on women in rebel groups and focused on group level approach which fits for my current thesis project. While these works mainly concentrate to compare different groups with different ideologies, this thesis will fill the research gap by comparing jihadist groups that are from a similar umbrella, Boko Haram, with similar Islamist ideology that has not yet been covered. Moreover, a study by Kalyvas leaves a gap by ignoring the gender aspect in popular support. Thus, it leads into further question whether his three alternative explanations could also affect the women's participation in jihadist groups, particularly in the context of Boko Haram factions. Ultimately, with the gaps in studying the variation of female membership in rebel groups, this thesis will explore further to examine the factors that explain different number of female members in jihadist groups and utilize these group's factors studies, coupled with individual factors, to build a more systematic study on female members in local jihadist groups.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

What factors explain the variation in number of female members in jihadist groups?

This section seeks to establish a theoretical framework to help the analysis of the different number of female members in jihadist groups, specifically in JAS and ISWAP cases. Here, I explore the explanatory factors that could bridge to answer the main research question of this thesis. As I previously argue, by only relying on one point of view in analysing women's participation in rebel group will not be sufficient to answer the research question that I raise in this thesis *why does one jihadist group have more female members than other jihadist groups?* Therefore, I draw on the general theoretical framework from both individual and group level factors that explore the analysis of women involvement in rebel groups (Viterna, 2013; Thomas & Bond, 2015; Henshaw, 2016; Wood & Thomas, 2017; Wood, 2019). These studies examine whether a rebel group has female members or recruiting women into the group depend on individual motivation to improve social and economic condition, gain protection, and group's leadership and ideological orientation.

Wood's work shed a light on the interaction of the severity of conflict-induced resource demands and group's political ideology which linked to the prevalence of female combatants in

rebel groups (Wood, 2019). Coupled with the statistical result, Wood provided robust findings that (1) resource demands and group ideology jointly influence the prevalence of female combatants in a rebel group, (2) the relationship between increased demands for resource and the decision to recruit female combatants is conditioned by group's ideological orientation, and (3) rebel groups with religious ideologies persist in excluding female combatants even as conflict costs mount and recruitment becomes more difficult (Wood, 2019, p. 295).

Ideology will not be sufficient to explain the trend of women recruitment in rebel groups, previous research also considered other factors such as, recruitment strategy, incentive, distance, and leadership (Thomas & Bond, 2015; Henshaw, 2016; Gates, 2002; Weinstein, 2007; Humphreys & Weinstein, 2008; Wood, 2019). In the recruitment strategy, the debate evolved around forced/coerced and voluntarily recruitment. While Thomas and Bond found a statistically significant finding that rebel groups with coercive recruitment strategy are more likely to have female members, Henshaw showed the opposite. Regarding coercive recruitment, Aisha Ahmad on her study has another standpoint that views battlefield condition, material endowments, and ideological affiliation have an obscure relationship with the adoption of new jihadist norms of violence (Ahmad, 2019, p. 84). She further explained that the sweeping changes in jihadist norms of violence occurs only when there is external trigger event that gives jihadist leaders the opportunity to act violent (Ahmad, 2019, p. 84). The opportunity to adopt new forms of violence could be seen as the frustration of the rebel groups to coercively recruit women into the groups which might lead to the surged number of female members inside the groups. However, women's presence in a group is again determined by the perception of the groups' leaders. In other words, the rebel leaders are responsible for deciding how many women they will recruit into the group and determining whether they will train, equip, and deploy women in combat.

Thus, I will seek the answer to the question of this thesis *why does one jihadist group have more female members than other jihadist groups?* by exploring the question of *what factors explain the variation in female membership in JAS and ISWAP?* That, also guided by the existing research premises on both individual and group level point of view. I formulate two separate ways of examining the factors of the variation in female members in jihadist groups to answer the question. First, the individual level factors, I incorporate Viterna's approach with *pull, push*, and *persuaded* factors. The reason I chose to utilize this approach is because I found *pull, push,* and *persuaded* factors allows the researcher to understand individual factors from women in a broader

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view. Based on Viterna's individual factors, I argue that the individual factors that might influence women to join one jihadist group over the other are: (a) women are *pulled* into the group because they have a strong ideological and political belief on the group, (b) women are *pushed* to join the group they do not have resources to escape the crisis, (c) women were *persuaded* to participate in the group for seeking an adventure and retribution.

Second, in the group's factors, I argue that (a) the incorporation of women into the groups depends on the groups' ideological orientation, (b) leaders' perception, and (c) the opportunity to adopt new form of violence due to the rivalry against the government. This thesis will further operationalize and test the hypotheses by comparing two case study of local jihadist groups in Nigeria, JAS, and ISWAP, particularly on their ideology, tactics, and the instrumentalization of women.

3   Methodology

In the last chapter, I develop a theoretical framework to study the variation in female members in jihadist groups in a specific case. For this chapter, I will elaborate how such framework will be applied on the specific comparative cases of Boko Haram factions: JAS and ISWAP.

This chapter is divided into four sections. First, I present the overall research design, which consists of the explanation of paired comparison method and case selection. I reflect on the selection of the case study raised in this thesis and explain how and why I choose paired comparison method for the study. Second, I elaborate in detail how I collected, analyzed, and interpreted the existing data from various sources. Following that, I further clarify the sources I used for building the case study used in the analysis. Finally, I discuss the challenges and pitfalls that emerge from this research design and methodological choices.

3.1 Research Design

The main research question of this thesis is *why does one jihadist group have more female members than the others?* In order to understand and help explaining the variation or different numbers of female members participate in rebel groups, this thesis explores a sub-question of *what factors explain the variation in female membership in jihadist groups?* To further answer the sub question at hand, I will conduct a paired comparison case study that is most often associated with qualitative approach. As for comparison, I will select a case from the local jihadist group's factions in Nigeria: *Jama'tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad* (JAS) and the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) who are under the umbrella of jihadist group in Nigeria that is known as Boko Haram. As the two groups have similar characteristics, i.e., from a similar parent organization (Boko Haram) and ideology hence, I use Most Similar System Design method (MSSD) in paired comparative analysis.

Considering the study is a small-*n,* this thesis will use qualitative methods. I will systematically gather and analyse existing empirical data on women's participation in Boko Haram splinter groups from both primary and secondary data. Due to the limitation of this study to conduct an interview with women who involved in and/or victimized by Boko Haram and its factions, I, therefore collect the existing interviews that have been conducted by international organizations and/or researchers for the purpose of the analysis. Coupled with existing research on the similar

topic, this study will historically narrate the comparison case study of female members in Boko Haram and its factions to identify the factors that could explain the variation in female membership in two splinter groups of Boko Haram, JAS, and ISWAP. Additionally, the existing research have conducted cross-sectional comparison in large-*n* studies across different ideologies. Thus, by selecting the case study of Boko Haram factional groups and employing most similar paired comparison methods, this study can contribute to provide a descriptive work in comparative discussion on female members in the similar ideology.

In the following sections, I will do three things. First, I will elaborate more on paired comparison method that is used for this study, especially on the most similar system design that I find fit for the study. Second, I will further explain the case selection for this thesis. Lastly, I will discuss the challenges and pitfalls of this research.

3.1.1 Paired Comparison

In the field of political science analysis, paired comparison is a method that differs from both single-case studies and multi-case studies. Paired comparison method has been used widely in various settings in comparative politics, such as to compare similar and different cases or countries; to compare voters, parties, and public opinion; to study large processes, political contention, and to examine various levels of polity (Tarrow, 2010, p. 231). In many case-study literature, paired comparison is assimilated with single-case study (Eckstein, 1975; Gerring, 2004; Lijphart, 1971). Similar to single-case studies, paired comparison enables causal-process analysis, which is not commonly possible in large-*n* studies (Brady & Collier, 2004). According to Tarrow, paired comparison often acts as an intermediate step between a single-case study, which suggests a general relationship, and a multi-case analysis that tests or refines theory (Tarrow, 2010, p. 245).

Scholars have subsequently reflected on the strategy of paired comparison that is also proposed by John Stuart Mill: the methods of similarity and difference (Tarrow, 2010, p. 233). A comparison of comparable cases is generally accepted as the most appropriate method of paired comparison (Gisselquist, 2014, p. 478). As Mill points out, it is not uncommon for both the method of agreement and the method of difference to be insufficient, but in many cases, a combination of both is required (Tarrow, 2010, p. 233). This becomes known as the "joint method of agreement and difference". In a similar vein, Gerring (2007), and Przeworski and Teune (1970) distinguished

two ways of carrying out comparative analysis: "most-similar system" and "most-different system" design (Gerring, 2007, p. 139; Przeworski & Teune, 1970, p. 31).

The difference between most-similar and most-different system design is that most-similar system is used when analyzing a minimum of two cases that are quite similar, and yet demonstrate surprisingly different outcome (Gerring, 2008, p. 671). As for most-different, the researchers use this method to identify cases that are different but generate similar outcomes. Here, Gerring argues that the variation on the independent variable is prized, while variation on the outcome is eschewed (Gerring, 2008). For this thesis, I will employ the most similar system design that will be explained in more detail subsequently.

3.1.1.1 *Most Similar System Design* (MSSD)

As mentioned earlier, a most-similar system design is done by choosing cases that are similar in as many independent variables as possible with the exception of the phenomenon to be examined. There are two different aims in using most similar system design. First, if the aim is to conduct an exploratory study (i.e., hypothesis generating), the researcher requires cases that differ in the outcome of theoretical interest but are similar in the underlying factors that may have contributed to the outcome (Gerring, 2008, p. 671). Second, if the study design is confirmatory (hypothesis testing), the researcher usually begins with a strong hypothesis (Gerring, 2008, p. 671). In the latter aim, the researcher attempts to identify cases that demonstrate a variation in outcomes, a difference in scores on the factor of interest, as well as similar scores on all other possible causal factors. Regardless, in a most similar research design, the purpose, or the basic setup, often changes as one moves from exploratory analysis to confirmation analysis (Gerring, 2008). In any case, when the results are published, they look like the results of a hypothesis-testing research design.

The study design in this thesis is confirmatory. As I have elaborated in the theoretical section, this thesis begins with strong hypothesis – group level factors have a more significant impact to the variation in the number of female members in one jihadist group than the other compared to individual level factors, in which I will test by comparing two most-similar jihadist groups in Nigeria. I explain further discussion regarding the case itself in the following section.

3.1.2 Case Selection

According to Jason Warner and Hilary Matfess on their research for the Combating Terrorism Centre at West Point, Boko Haram has deployed at least 244 women as suicide bombers between April 2011 and June 2017 (Warner & Matfess, 2017). The record of the number of female suicide bombers used by Boko Haram has surpassed the Tamil Tigers, who used at least 44 female suicide bombers over 10 years (Bloom & Matfess, 2016, p. 104). As a consequence, Boko Haram has used a larger number of women as a percentage of its total suicide bombers than any other group in history. Moreover, many studies on female membership and participation in rebel groups have extensively conducted comparative study both qualitatively and quantitatively across different rebel groups, different countries, and different political ideology. It, therefore, leaves the gap and makes Boko Haram appealing to compare, especially knowing that Boko Haram is an umbrella term of the local jihadi organizations based in Nigeria that consists of *Jama'tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad* (JAS), *Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan* (Ansaru), and the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP).

This thesis will utilize a most-similar case study approach. I focused upon the Boko Haram splinter groups: *Jama'tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad* (JAS) and the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP). Here, I decided to select Boko Haram factions because they are more local than the other big jihadist groups, such as Al-Qaeda or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Although Al-Qaeda and ISIS are similar yet, they are amorphous with transnational structure which sometimes escape to best attempt to pin down, categorize, or delineate them. In addition, for most-similar system design method, it is interesting to compare a localized group that shared similar characteristics, such as established under the same big umbrella of jihadist movement with Islamist ideology and similar operational area.

It is worth noting the issue of "atheoretical case selection". In paired comparison, cases are often selected "atheoretically" and in this study, I draw the case from the same region, i.e., Boko Haram factions (Gisselquist, 2014, p. 480). Nonetheless, drawing comparisons from the same region is not necessarily a bad approach, as the unit of analysis in the same region may share a number of characteristics with each other (Gisselquist, 2014).

3.2 Data

The previous studies have generated a dataset that captured various aspect of women's involvement in armed groups to understand the patterns of female participation in rebel organizations (Thomas & Bond, 2015; Henshaw, 2016; Wood & Thomas, 2019). However, the datasets by Thomas and Bond (2015) only covers armed groups in Africa, except Nigeria, while Henshaw (2016) dataset is limited to armed groups between 1990 and 2008. A recent dataset by Wood and Thomas (2019), Women in Armed Rebellion Dataset (WARD), provides information on the prevalence of female fighters in over 300 armed rebel organizations between 1964 and 2014. Moreover, WARD has the dataset on military faction, and it is apparent that the women prevalence in Boko Haram (JAS) is low with the estimated percentage of <5% (Wood & Thomas, 2019). With that, this thesis uses WARD data as a point of departure to examine the percentage of female members in Boko Haram/JAS. However, WARD dataset does not include Boko Haram factions which then cannot be used to compare the percentage of female members.

Therefore, the existing datasets cannot provide the precise percentage of female members in Boko Haram factions. With that and for the purpose of this thesis, I explore the data from Tony Blair Institute's Global Extremism Monitor (GEM) that tracks violent Islamist extremism and provide the information of the activity of the two Boko Haram factions, JAS, and ISWAP, throughout 2017. GEM data recorded the permissible attacks that committed by both groups. According to GEM data, the groups acted in accordance with their ideological expositions (Institute for Global Change, 2018). Only in 2017, Shekau had involved female suicide bombers in 93 incidents (Bryson & Bukarti, 2018, p. 11). An estimated 139 women detonated, and another 34 were intercepted or failed to detonate. The attacks by women in Shekau's faction resulted in 3.1 deaths per attack (Bryson & Bukarti, 2018, p. 11). Moreover, the data also demonstrates that not only Shekau's faction (JAS) is more brutal than Barnawi's faction (ISWAP), but their targets of the attack are very different as Shekau is focused more on civilians.

In addition to the exiting dataset, this thesis will systematically collect both primary and secondary data. For the primary data, I rely on mass news report from verified media outlets, online archive sources, and international organizations that conducted field research and interview for their publications, such as Amnesty International and UNICEF. I further gathered data from existing scholarly publications and journals as the secondary sources.

3.3 Sources

Organization

This study is limited in conducting interviews or fieldwork and yet, it is essential to have testimonies reported from the female members of Boko Haram themselves. The testimonies function as first-hand accounts of the lived experience of women while serving the jihadist groups. To obtain such data, I delve into organizational reports that have been published in which contained interview with the women who used to live under Boko Haram. The reports are mostly retrieved from the humanitarian organizations, including but not limited to Amnesty International, UNICEF, and Human Rights Watch. The organizations' reports are also useful for this thesis to gain data from the field without conducting a fieldwork study as those organizations work closely with the community in affected area and local journalists to document the description of living under Boko Haram as a woman.

Mass News Searches

To further support this study with primary data, I conducted mass news searches in several steps. First, I used the keyword: "women in Boko Haram", "ISWAP", "JAS", "kidnapping", and "female suicide bombers". Second, I restricted the date range from 2002 to 2018. Third, I systematically read through relevant articles. Most of the news that are used here are coming from the BBC News, Al-Jazeera, and Reuters as they provided detail information and interview with the kidnapped victim of Boko Haram factions.

Online Archive Source

Archives function as the gatekeepers of primary source materials as the first-hand details or evidence concerning historical events or figures can be found in archives. Here, I utilize an online archive source of *unmasking Boko Haram* which publishes rare and vintage sources on Boko Haram, ISWAP, Ansaru, and Aqim managed and collected by Jacob Zenn.[2] This archive comes in handy to find propaganda videos, leaders' video statements, groups' attacks, and many others that might not be available anymore on the internet.

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[2] All archive sources retrieved from Unmasking Boko Haram, https://unmaskingbokoharam.com/archived-sources-2/

YouTube Searches

As this study acknowledges how important it is to have testimonials from the women who lived under Boko Haram to help answering the research question, having a written report that only quoted part of the conversation is not sufficient. Hence, I conducted YouTube searches with keyword: "Boko haram girls' interview", "Boko haram kidnapping", and "Shekau speech". The goal for YouTube searches is not only to provide this study with testimonials from the women side, but also to understand the reasoning from the group's side from the speech of the leader. The YouTube searches are also the string of mass media and archived of *unmasking Boko Haram.*

Scholars' Publications

As for secondary sources, I explore various existing scholarly publications, journals, and research on a similar topic as this thesis. These scholars' publications help building the foundation of this study as they already have conducted research both qualitatively and quantitatively. Some examples of scholars' publications that utilized in this thesis are mostly from think tanks that focused on terrorism and radicalism namely, the International Centre for Counterterrorism (ICCT), the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization (ICSR) and Combating Terrorism Centre – West Point (CTC Sentinel).

3.4 Challenges and Pitfalls

Like any other thesis and academic research, this thesis is subjected to challenges and pitfalls. Some of the challenges are concerning language competence, ethical issue, and the limitation of data on the actual numbers of female members. The pitfalls of this thesis are related to selection bias and non-representativeness.

Regarding the first challenge, I do not speak Hausa or Arabic. Meanwhile, the language used in many of propaganda videos where the leader of Boko Haram made statements on the claim of operations or attacks are in Hausa and Arabic. It is hard to understand the message on the videos, and as a result, I rely on the secondary sources in which they interpreted what the videos were about. Second, ethical issue and the limitation to conduct an interview with the female victims and/or perpetrators of Boko Haram. Stake and Jegatheesan (2008), as quoted in Silverman (2016),

stated that "*to comprehend some meanings of life, one must get closer to that life*" (Silverman, 2016, p. 62).

Qualitative studies always face the challenge when searching for rich data. Likewise, in this thesis, I do not have the capacity to do a fieldwork study to Borno state in Nigeria to collect the sources myself from the ground. The reason for this is due to the time limitation for this thesis, as well as ethical issues during the fieldwork and interview. Therefore, being unable to be closer to the sources itself is a challenge that I encountered in this study.

The last challenge concerns the existing data I rely on. There is no actual number of female members in each group of Boko Haram factions. There is a particular reason for this; when one discusses "members", it is hard to distinguish the role of the members itself. Therefore, the existing numbers only for the estimation of female combatants and disregards the women's role as supporters in jihadist groups. With that, this thesis cannot provide the precise number of female members in each Boko Haram splinter groups.

When it comes to pitfalls, it is related to the research design that I use in this study. One of the pitfalls is the selection bias. First, selection bias is a common pitfall in the case selection of qualitative research, especially for small-n study. Selecting cases on dependent variables causes this thesis to be prone to bias and introduces the issue of non-representativeness. Non-representativeness is a problem in qualitative comparative analysis with a small-n which is particularly worrisome in paired comparison as the cases are not selected because of their extreme values (Tarrow, 2010, p. 247; Gisselquist, 2014, p. 480). A way to avoid selection bias in research is by using a strategy of random selection of units (random sampling) that will be a statistical study with a large-n. In other words, it is possible to mitigate potential bias by selecting cases that are not extreme outliers based on their residuals in the full model (Gerring, 2008, p. 26). In small-n studies, however, random sampling is indeed often problematic and is not generally appropriate in small-n studies (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994) . Therefore, potential biases in the chosen case must be addressed in a speculative way if one employs a qualitative method (Gerring, 2008, p. 26).

4 Female Members in Boko Haram and Its Factions

4.1 Understanding Boko Haram

The name of "Boko Haram" is derived from Hausa-Arabic language which loosely translates into English as "Western education is forbidden (*haram*)" (Zenn, 2020, p. 2). While *haram* is from Arabic word meaning "forbidden", *boko* has uncertain meaning. Based on Hausa dictionaries, *boko* means "fraudulence, sham, or inauthenticity", while linguists suggest that *boko* is derived from Hausa's word for "magic", "deception", "superstition" and takes after the English word "book" (Zenn, 2020; Warner & Lizzo, 2021). For the purpose of this thesis, "Boko Haram" is used to refer to an umbrella term of jihadist movements, including JAS, Ansaru, and ISWAP, that emerged in Nigeria that is first a salafi preaching movement and then a violent jihadi organization established in 2002 (Barnett, Rufa'i, & Abdulaziz, 2022; Zenn, 2020). However, the local population, media, and government typically still treated the two splinter groups as one group, Boko Haram.

In 2002, the group was called as Taliban by the media and the locals. The group members were based at Kanama camp, Yobe State and had no formal name to address themselves. They usually called themselves as *mujahidin* (jihadists), *muhajirun* (emigrants), or Kanama brothers (Zenn, 2020, p. 2). The group members began to follow their sole leader from 2004-2009, Mohammed Yusuf, and call themselves as Yusufia. In 2007, the Boko Haram name assigned by rival Muslim scholars and adopted by the Nigerian government as well as the media to Mohammed Yusuf's caricature that prohibited Muslim from obtaining Western education in schools (Zenn, 2020, p. 2). The community began addressing the name of Boko Haram to the group from which it emerged and reflects the organization's roots in local debates (Matfess, 2017, p. 39).

Mohammed Yusuf himself was a Borno, a native Nigerian, while the members of the group are mostly Kanuri (Zenn, 2015, p. 17). His *dawah* (preaching) was predominantly about jihad, establishing an Islamic state, Nigerian and Western abuses of Muslims, and the illegitimacy of constitutional democracy (Zenn, 2020, p. 2). Thus, his *dawah* on *boko haram* or the forbidden western education was secondary. After a confrontation between Yusuf's followers and Nigeria security forces in 2009, Yusuf was arrested and executed by the government while in police custody (Ahmed, 2019, p. 3). The most notably lieutenants and the closest followers of Yusuf, Abubakar Shekau and Mamman Nur, competed with one another for a leadership position of the group. However, Abubakar Shekau gained his victory as a charismatic, ambitious, and ruthless

leader (Ahmed, 2019, p. 3). His leadership led the group into an insurgent organization (Bakindo, 2018). He then changed the group's name into *Jama'tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad* (JAS) and quickly became the deadliest terrorist in the world (Ahmed, 2019, p. 3).

4.2 The Split of Boko Haram

Between 2010 and 2015, the Boko Haram Shekau-led focused on targeting secular schools, government premises, international institutions, churches, and began targeting Muslim civilians frequently (Ahmed, 2019). The internal fragmentation in Boko Haram began in 2012 against Shekau's brutality against Muslim population. Former members of Boko Haram who opposed Shekau's leadership, Muhammed Auwal Ibrahim Gombe and Khalid al-Barnawi, formed a faction called *Jamaat Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan* (Ansaru)*, which in Arabic means Group of Muslim Supporters in Black Africa (Zenn, 2020; Zenn & Weiss, 2021). Despite Ansaru's difference with JAS, the group maintains that Ansaru and JAS are like the Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, pursuing similar objectives and engaging in the same struggle with different leaders (Zenn, 2013).

However, Ansaru's objectives were to defend Muslims throughout Africa by fighting against the Nigerian government and international interest, while criticizing JAS for killing fellow Muslims (Institute, 2015). Ansaru gained prominence due to its kidnapping of foreigners in Northern Nigeria, prison break operation in Abuja, and a media strategy that challenged Shekau (Zenn, 2013). According to existing literature on Ansaru, the total membership of the group remains unknown and is estimated to be much lower than JAS (Institute, 2015). Given that information, one could assume that the number of female members inside Ansaru is small to almost none. Therefore, I will not take Ansaru into account in this thesis and will not further analyze the group for a comparison.

The groups were further separated due to the long-standing ideological disagreement within Boko Haram, between Abu Musab al-Barnawi and Mamman Nur on one hand, and Shekau on the other has caused another fragmentation in 2016. In 2015, Shekau pledged loyalty to IS caliph Abubakar al-Baghdadi after a courtship that started with the Chibok kidnapping (Zenn, 2020, p. 3). IS, then, renamed Boko Haram as the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) where the Boko Haram JAS was superseded and became inactive (Zenn, 2020, p. 3). Hence, by

2015 there were two Nigerian jihadist groups namely, Shekau-led ISWAP and Ansaru. During the Consultative Council (Shura Council) meeting, Mamman Nur spoke on behalf of those who opposed Shekau's practices, notably regarding the attack against or using women (Bryson & Bukarti, 2018, p. 6). As Shekau rejected to change his practices, Abu Musab al-Barnawi demanded a separation from Shekau and reported him for his brutal and un-Islamic use of violence (Bryson & Bukarti, 2018, p. 6). In 2016, Abu Musab al-Barnawi was assigned as ISWAP leader and demoted Abubakar Shekau who reassumed his position as a leader of JAS (Zenn, 2020, p. 3).

Following the separation, both JAS and ISWAP came clear with the propaganda war against each other, particularly on their interpretation of Islamic law with the major key differences on the legality of using women and girls to commit attacks and the permissibility of attacking civilians (Mahmood & Ani, 2018). Despite their differences, I argue that both jihadist groups, JAS and ISWAP, do not compete with each other. The reasons for that are first, after the split, the groups seemed to cohabitate where geography served as a convenient buffer. The operational area of both groups is in the North-East of Nigeria, however, JAS is more actively operating towards Cameroon, while ISWAP's terrain of operation is closer to the Niger border. Second, the tactics and strategies of JAS and ISWAP did not mirror each other, as they have different ideologies. Therefore, I believe there is no real contest between the two sides, they separately conduct their operations. In the following section, I will further elaborate the differences of JAS and ISWAP ideologies, attack patterns and tactics.

4.2.1 *Jama'tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad* (JAS)

In retrospect, Boko Haram had its first insurgency movement in 2009 that resulted in extrajudicial killing of the first leader of Boko Haram, Muhammad Yusuf. The insurgency itself was supported by the ideological framework of Al-Qaeda and suicide bombings that Boko Haram promoted (Kassim, 2018). This event, therefore, served as a turning point for the unrestrained in the group's use of violence, thus exacerbating the harm to civilians. Further, as Abu-Bakr Shekau was appointed by the Consultative Council as the next leader of Boko Haram and changed the name into *Jama'tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad* (JAS), one could observe that there was a shifting in the group's ideology, particularly the ideological deviations of Shekau which then led to the

internal fraction inside Boko Haram. In addition, the ideological deviations also affected the group's tactics and attack patterns.

Before I delve further into the effects of ideological deviations of Shekau, the ideological schism inside Boko Haram has commenced in the early 2000s between Muhammad Yusuf and Muhammad Ali, the latter who was the first Nigerian Taliban. Ali and Yusuf argued against two viewpoints which were widely recognized by the other Salafi clerics in the region. In their first argument, Ali and Yusuf denied the notion that replacing God's law with secular ones is only 'minor unbelief'. According to them, this is major unbelief and polytheism that can lead to excommunication from Islam (Kassim, 2018, p. 10). Second, both Ali and Yusuf argued against the claim that political leaders who govern under secular laws cannot be declared *takfir*[3] until Islamic scholars investigate (*tafsil*)[4] the rulers to determine whether they have made their acts of legislation permissible or if they believe that secular law is superior or equal to God's law. Based on their view, *takfir* could be declared before *tafsil*.

Although political rulers who governed by secular laws can be declared as apostates, Yusuf reiterated that it is important to consider the objections to declaring takfir on them or the potential excuse of ignorance that the political rulers might invoke to defend themselves when declaring takfir. Moreover, by proselytizing against the political rulers, he believed that Islamic evidence would be established. Hence, in his stance, it is imperative to establish Islamic proof against the apostate rulers before engaging in Jihad against them. Ali, on the other hand, argued that establishing Islamic evidence against rulers before declaring jihad against them is not necessary since no one can claim ignorance of God's orders to rule with His laws rather than secular laws. In striking contrast, Ali's point of view corresponds to the mainstream jihadi-salafi ideology, while Yusuf's is different from the prevailing community's ideology. As Yusuf was persistent in his stance, it had caused him declared a takfir by the Nigerian Taliban.

In December 2004, Yusuf called for an internal truce between dispersed members of the Nigerian Taliban, and they thereafter pledged their allegiance to obey Yusuf's command and to assist him in his pursuit of proselytism (Kassim, 2018, p. 12). It was at this time that Yusuf began a gradual proselytizing process that eventually led to the uprising of July 2009 as a response to

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[3] Takfir is an Arabic word used to describe a Muslim as an infidel or non-believer. The practice of declaring or accusing another Muslim of apostasy.
[4] Tafsil refers to the detail of an investigation that is conducted by the Islamic scholars.

alleged excessive use of force by the police against the group members and their inability to obtain an official investigation. The uprising lasted from 25 July to 30 July 2009 that spread across four states: Bauchi, Kano, Yobe, and Borno in which the latter was the most extensive one as it was Yusuf-based movement (Adesoji, 2010, p. 98). The confrontation between Boko Haram and the Nigerian security forces led to the execution of Yusuf on 30th of July which made the group even more violent. Later, after the judicial killing of Yusuf, Abu-Bakr Shekau was appointed to be his successor of him and led Boko Haram. Ultimately, Abu-Bakr Shekau took over the group and engaged in assassinations, bombings, and suicide attacks across a much broader territory. Under his leadership, he changed the group's name into *Jama'tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad* (JAS) and deviated from group's ideology.

After 2009, there were continuous clashes between Christian and Muslim communities in the northern Nigeria in 2012 (Ahmad, 2019, p. 105). In response to the crises, the government tried to pressure Boko Haram to cease its activities by arresting the members, wives, and children of several Boko Haram commanders, including the wives of Shekau. After this event, Boko Haram began to use violence against both Muslim and non-Muslim women. At this juncture, it is important to point out the ideological deviations committed by Shekau as it might affect the continuity of the movement, Boko Haram or later known as JAS. A new adoption of violence in Boko Haram's tactics and strategies were first, it was the result of the rivalry between Boko Haram and the Nigerian government and second, with Shekau's ideological views that exhibited several deviations. The ideological deviations committed by Shekau was then marked as the schisms between Shekau and the would-be leaders[5] of *Jamaat Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan* (Ansaru) that splitted Boko Haram into two: JAS and Ansaru. The would-be leaders of Ansaru wrote a letter in early 2011 criticized the ideological deviations of Shekau (Kassim, 2018, p. 15).

According to the 2011 letter, the ideological deviations of Shekau were as follows (Kassim, 2018, p. 18):

1. Disregarding the principle and rule of takfir. Shekau generally labelled Muslims who participate in elections as infidels.

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[5] There were several candidates for the leadership: Khalid al-Barnawi, Abu Muhammad al-Hawsawi, Abu Ahmad al-Kishnawi, Abu al-Bara' al-Nurini al-Akinawi, Abu `Ubayda al-Kanawi, Abu `Abdallah al-Imam, Abu Muslim al-Ibrahimi, Abu Khalid al-Yerawi, Abu Nusayba al-Bushawi, Abu Maryam al-Ya`qub, and Abu `Asim al-Hasani.

2. Aside from his claim that he should be treated as a Caliph, Shekau's abuse of leadership, and the prohibition against traveling to jihad-torn lands such as Somalia and Algeria without his permission, Shekau would sentence his followers to death for violating this rule.

3. The group's Consultive Council was completely rejected due to his act as the high-handedness.

4. The act of spreading secrets, betraying confidences, withholding money, or refusing to prepare for war.

5. He encouraged lying and deceit, exhibited loose morals, separated the families, and promoted incorrect religious practices according to the group's interpretation.

In January 2012, a video message was released by Shekau in response to the government imprisoning his wives along with more than a hundred women and children of Boko Haram members (Zenn & Pearson, 2014, p. 47). In the video, Shekau threatened to kidnap the wives of the government officials. Although the video message was released in 2012, however, a significant evolution of Boko Haram's tactics took place in 2013. Boko Haram began its kidnapping operation in February 2013 by abducting seven members of French family in Cameroon (Reporter, 2013). This operation later carried out in Nigerian soil where Boko Haram abducted more than a dozen government officials and their families in Borno State (Zenn & Pearson, 2014, p. 47). Shekau released another video message addressed to the government official where he demanded to release the Boko Haram members, children, and wives who detained by the government and if such demands were not met, he promised that the hostages would be his servant (Zenn & Pearson, 2014, p. 48). The women were interviewed by Al-Jazeera several weeks after they were released in exchange for the wives of Boko Haram members. According to their account, they were being abducted for fourteen days by Boko Haram due to the imprisonment of Boko Haram's children and wives (Ndege, 2013).

Gender-based violence was not the only new strategy that Boko Haram adopted under Shekau's leadership. Another strategy that is interesting to note is their view on *takfir,* in which made Boko Haram killed the Muslims who do not have the same view as Boko Haram's ideology. Ansaru, as the first group that split from Boko Haram, formally announced its formation as a vanguard for Muslim against Boko Haram in June 2012 by posting a video on YouTube in both Hausa and English (Kassim, 2018, p. 18). Further split in the interpretations and practices of Boko

Haram emerged in 2016, particularly on the permissible target for violence and the involvement of women in the group. This will lead to the following discussion regarding the ideology and tactic of the splinter group of Boko Haram, the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP).

4.2.2. The Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP)

As briefly mentioned in this thesis, ISWAP was once under Shekau's leadership as he pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (IS). However, the group underwent internal frictions and disagreements between the top ideologues of the group, Mamman Nur and Abu Musab Al-Barnawi, and Shekau. Due to different views on ideology and practice, al-Barnawi reported his counterpart, Shekau, to ISIS for his brutality and violent behavior that is not accordance with Islam (Bryson & Bukarti, 2018, p. 6). In accord with the 2011 letter, Shekau's leadership was criticized by Nur and al-Barnawi on three main grounds: his despotic character, his ideology of extremes, and his poor operational abilities (Ahmed, 2019, p. 3). Moreover, it has been suggested to Shekau to abandon his practices, but he has chosen not to do so. Hence, the group separated in 2016 where Shekau's faction reassumed its original name, JAS, and IS recognized Abu Musab al-Barnawi as a new leader of ISWAP (Bryson & Bukarti, 2018, p. 6).

Further, under Al-Barnawi, ISWAP sought to distinguish itself from Shekau's faction, JAS. First, in order to gain its legitimacy, ISWAP waged guerrilla warfare in North-Eastern Nigeria and on Lake Chad's periphery, having its territorial base on the banks and islands of Lake Chad. In terms of territorial presence, ISWAP also operated along the northern Borno state to the eastern Yobe state (Group, Facing the Challenge of the Islamic State in West Africa Province, 2019). On June 3rd, 2016, ISWAP launched its first major military operation in Bosso, a town near Nigerian border of Lake Chad (Group, Facing the Challenge of the Islamic State in West Africa Province, 2019). The attack summarized ISWAP's modus operandi: targeting the military and seizing arms without harming the civilians. It is apparent that ISWAP only attacks those who are in military groups or vigilante groups that fight against them. In addition to that, ISWAP also clearly adopted a more tolerant attitude towards Muslim civilians, in contrast to JAS.

Second, the group's initiative to win people's hearts and minds by filling the gaps in governance and service delivery (Group, Facing the Challenge of the Islamic State in West Africa Province, 2019). Although the group still used violent and coercive methods often, ISWAP,

however, has established a symbiotic relationship with the inhabitants in Lake Chad area (Group, Facing the Challenge of the Islamic State in West Africa Province, 2019). ISWAP showed a level of support among locals that Boko Haram has alienated and has turned neglected communities in the area and islands in Lake Chad into sources of economic support for the region.

Third, ISWAP has a different approach in terms of women's involvement in the group. Unlike JAS, women and girls are forbidden to carry out acts of violence, for an instance as the attackers or suicide bombers, in ISWAP. Women and girls are only allowed to have a supporter role or as the non-combatants in the group (further discussed in section 4 below).

Table 1: Groups comparison based on ideology

Group	Permissible Target	Permissible Attackers	Women's Involvement
JAS	Everyone who is not on board with Boko Haram's worldview.	Allowing women to conduct attacks	As both combatants and non-combatants, but no leadership position
ISWAP	Those who are in the military or vigilante groups who fight against the groups (combatants).	Not allowing women to conduct attacks	Only as non-combatants, no leadership position

4.3 Female Members in JAS and ISWAP

4. 3. 1. The Instrumentalization of Women inJAS and ISWAP

Before I separately discuss how the two groups instrumentalize women, it is important for this thesis to highlight the most infamous kidnapping case in Chibok that was committed by Boko Haram in 2014. To reassert, this thesis defines Boko Haram as the umbrella term of jihadist groups in Nigeria which consists of JAS, Ansaru, and ISWAP. Moreover, this thesis also acknowledges that Boko Haram, in most literature, refers to Shekau-led Boko Haram or JAS. With that in mind, this thesis will argue about the kidnapping cases, including Chibok in 2014, that were committed by the Shekau-led Boko Haram, later known as JAS. The event occurred before Shekau pledged his loyalty to IS in 2015 and the separation of ISWAP in 2016. The atrocities committed by

Shekau-led Boko Haram against women and children then caused contentious issues among the members within the sect. In this section, I will further discuss the differences how women are used in JAS and ISWAP.

4.3.1.1 JAS

As I have discussed earlier, one could see that the instrumental use of women is one of the main new tactical features of Shekau-led Boko Haram in response to the Nigerian government's operation against the group. The first kidnapping case in Nigeria was between February and May in 2013 where the group kidnapped for more than a dozen of government officials' families (Zenn & Pearson, 2014, p. 47; Group, 2016, p.6). In May, Boko Haram captured a dozen women as they carried out a mass assault in Bama (Zenn & Pearson, 2014). Following the attack, the Nigerian government immediately declared state of emergency in 2013 accompanied by the deployment of security forces against the group. The government's reaction has caused a significant evolution of Boko Haram's tactic where they began to instrumentalize women for instance, abducting Christian women, engaging women in support roles, and even using female as suicide bombers (Zenn & Pearson, 2014, p. 52; Group, 2016, p.6). According to the interview conducted by the Al-Jazeera, these women were visiting their relatives when the group raided the area, and their abduction was a response to government's detention of the wives, children, and members of Boko Haram (Ndege, 2013). Moreover, the Human Rights Watch report claimed that during kidnapping raid in 2013, Boko Haram threw sums of money to the girls' parents in exchange to their daughters (Watch, Nigeria: Boko Haram Abducts Women, Recruits Children, 2013).

Another kidnapping case took place in February 2014 in which Shekau admitted that the group has captured at least 25 women and left more than 53 people dead in Konduga (Watch, 2014). Two months later, on 14 April 2014, Boko Haram stormed a government secondary boarding school in Chibok and carried 276 innocent schoolgirls who had been at the school to take exams (Matfess, 2017, p. 128). This case drew the global media attention and led to a number of popular national and international protest with the slogan '#BringBackOurGirls" (BBC, Nigeria Chibok Abductions: What We Know, 2017).

On 5 May, Abubakar Shekau posted 17 minutes video on YouTube showing approximately 100 girls wearing full veil and praying (Ola, 2014). In that video, Shekau elaborated on how the group intended to use the girls:

"*All I am saying is that if you want us to release the girls that we have kidnapped, those who have not accepted Islam will be treated as the Prophet (Mohammed) treated infidels and they will stay with us.*" (Ola, 2014).

According to Shekau, rather than attending school, the girls should have gotten married and even worse, he said that:

"*God instructed me to sell them, they are his properties, and I will carry out his instructions.*" (BBC, 2014).

In addition, he also made an offer in the video to release the abducted schoolgirls in exchange for its members who were detained by the government.

"*We will not release them while you detain our brothers…*" (Ola , 2014).

Based on a series of abductions committed by Boko Haram, the Chibok kidnapping was indeed just a tip of an iceberg of Shekau-led Boko Haram's widespread kidnapping cases. It seemed that Shekau also had asked for ransom to the Nigerian government for some of the Chibok girls (Nwaubani, 2021). According to the Amnesty International, they estimated that the number of women and girls who abducted by Boko Haram is likely to be more than 2,000 (International, 2015). What comes after these abductions is that women are used as instruments of power by Boko Haram. Shortly after Chibok kidnapping, there were a series of female suicide bombings and several activities linked to the group were conducted by women. A 19-year-old girl, Aisha, told Amnesty International:

"*[…] they used to train girls how to shoot guns. I was among the girls trained to shoot. I was also trained how to use bombs and how to attack a village […]*". (Aisha, 2015).

She further added, "[…] *this training went on for three weeks after we arrived. Then they started sending some of us to operations. I went on one operation to my own village*." (Aisha, 2015).

The first wave of female suicide bombing took place at the military barracks in Gombe in June 2015 and followed by the second one in Lagos (Pearson, 2015, p. 19). The attack in Gombe was conducted by a middle-aged woman who detonated her Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) at the security checkpoint, killing one soldier (Chothia, 2014). In the following month, there were four subsequent blasts in Kano which was conducted by young women and girls who were allegedly the Chibok abductees (Chothia, 2014).

The second wave of using female suicide bombers began in November and lasting until March. With the evolving double attack, female suicide bombers showed more lethality and induced more casualties. As a result, seventy-eight people were reportedly killed on 26 November 2014 at a market in Maiduguri (Pearson, 2015, p. 20). The same market was attacked in January by a girl who was reported to be between the ages of 7 and 10, killing twenty more people (Pearson, 2015). There were at least eighty-nine attacks with more than 1,200 deaths and greater number of injuries recorded between June 2014 and January 2016 (Bloom & Matfess, 2016, p. 105). The United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated that 20 percent of the suicide bombers inside Shekau-led Boko Haram were children with three quarters of them being girls (UNICEF, Beyond Chibok, 2016).

It is worth noting that the wives of Boko Haram, during the interview, insisted that female suicide bombers were all voluntarily basis. Aisha claimed that:

"*They go to the leader and volunteer, and then the sect gives them three months training so that they can see your mind before sending them out on a mission.*" (Matfess, 2017, p. 229).

Aisha further claimed that the motivation for these women to participate as female suicide bombers were because some of them were widows and some were married and joined their husband on a joint mission (Matfess, 2017, p. 229). Moreover, Hauwa, a 14-year-old girl who married to Boko Haram fighter and joined the group, reiterated that female suicide bombing was not carried out under coercion or pressure exerted by the sect (Matfess, 2017, p. 229). The motivating factor for girls to volunteer as female suicide bombers was to seek for revenge.

"It is done as revenge. If a seven-year-old girl is a bomber, it is probably because her mother has died, so she is sent out to take revenge on the Nigerian military" – Hauwa (Matfess, 2017, p. 229).

While many of these women were abducted and coerced, one cannot deny the fact that some others were socialized and volunteered to participate in the group (Matfess, 2017, p. 182).

"If I saw [the insurgents], I ran– until one time when I entered into them. I entered because I love him." – Hauwa, (Matfess, 2017, p. 183).

In retrospect, before Boko Haram turned to mass violence against women and children, the group was essentially one of a vocal Islamic movement calling for Quranic study and purified Islam practice (Group, 2016, p. 5). The opportunity to learn Qur'an and learn Arabic has attracted young women to join the group. That was how Boko Haram founder, Mohammad Yusuf, attracted female followers. In many cases, marriage to Boko Haram was identified as a means for women to join the organization. Yusuf also encouraged marriage within the sect and relieved young women from the pressures of family responsibilities and financial demands (Group, 2016, p. 5). Halima, an 18-year-old girl who coercively taken into the group as a wife revealed that (Matfess, 2017, p. 183):

"When you marry Boko Haram, you are free. All you have to do is clean a little."

It is also well-known that those who were kidnapped by the group were forced to marry the group's members, it is either to marry them or get killed. Based on the interview conducted by Matfess in Maiduguri, Zara, a 16-year-old said (Matfess, 2017, p. 184):

"Some girls married the fighters willingly, some married for food, and some refused and were killed or beaten."

For example, Khadija (17-year-old) told UNICEF that she was kidnapped by a Boko Haram fighter while she was visiting her mother in Banki, Nigeria. Boko Haram then locked her

up in a house and she confessed that she had been married to a Boko Haram fighter as she was forced to do so,

"*If you do not marry us, we will kill you. Whether you like it or not, we have already married you*." (UNICEF, Beyond Chibok, 2016, p. 4)

In addition to augmenting social status, women's role as wives often provides domestic or sexual services (at times forced). It is also possible that their adherence to the movement's version of Islam, whether willingly or forcefully, may contribute to recruit other women. In the absence of lucrative trafficking and foreign financial support, human being becomes a valuable asset (Group, 2016, p. 8). Boko Haram, consequently, entertained its fighters with marriage prospects (Group, 2016, p. 8). The presence of women inside the group, therefore, becoming valuable incentives for the male fighters and the potential male recruits. There appears to have been a prerogative on the part of leaders to manage marriageable females and girls, including widows (Group, 2016, p. 8).

In JAS, there have been instances where women have been recruited and allowed to perform non-traditional roles, such as spies, domestic laborers, fighters, and forced or willing suicide bombers. According to Shekau by citing the Qur'an, due to certain circumstances, it is permitted to engage women in act of violence (Bukarti, 2017). Therefore, the incorporation of women inside the group and the use of female-led attacks has become the symbol in which Boko Haram means to distinguish itself from the other local jihadist groups.

4.3.1.2. ISWAP

Although one could note that all the abduction cases occurred before the fragmentation of ISWAP, the instrumental use of women in Boko Haram, however, emphasizes the disagreement among the members inside Shekau-led Boko Haram. Mamman Nur, in fact, did not favor Shekau's practices and used Shekau's brutality against women and girls to confront him when he led ISWAP in 2015. After ISWAP separated from JAS in 2016, ISWAP showed different approach on the use of women in the group. As previously discussed, ISWAP did not attack women unless they took arms against the group. Second, unlike JAS, ISWAP did not give women a combatant role, but support roles in which Nur argued that women and children should be kept at home, fed, and catered for

(Bryson & Bukarti, 2018, p. 10). By 2016, ISWAP had halted the practice of using female suicide bombers at least within the time frame of the thesis (2002-2018). In addition, following Chibok abduction case, Mamman Nur was also against the enslavement of girls by Shekau-led and suggested to marry them instead. He believed that being wives could give the girls more rights and protection than slaves (Bryson & Bukarti, 2018, p. 10).

Nevertheless, ISWAP carried out an unauthorized abduction in Dapchi, Yobe State on 19 February 2018 (Group, 2018; Campbell, 2018). The group claimed that some ISWAP members kidnapped 110 Dapchi girls from a school, most of them local Muslim women, and Leah Sharibu who was a Christian girl (Pearson & Zenn, 2021, p. 15). The ISWAP fighters were unaware of or initially ignored ISWAP leader, Al-Barnawi's, directives to avoid harming Muslim civilians. The Islamic State suggested that the kidnapping might hurt ISWAP's image. Thus, in contrast to Boko Haram who kept the women and girls captives as slaves or wives, ISWAP released them several weeks later. At the time of the release of the abductees on 21 March 2018, a total of 104 girls returned home where five girls died from suffocation during abduction and a Christian girl, Leah Sharibu, was declared as a slave as she refused to convert to Islam (Pearson & Zenn, 2021, p. 15). The Dapchi kidnapping allowed ISWAP to achieve several objectives such as, the group claimed that the girls had repented for their 'apostasy' in receiving Western education and grabbed media attention by releasing the abductees (Pearson & Zenn, 2021, p. 15). This abduction proved that ISWAP was more concerned about their image and has demonstrated that the group was less brutal than JAS and showing a good-will gesture.

Further cases on how ISWAP instrumentalize women can be seen in Rann, Borno where ISWAP attacked the Nigerian soldiers at a military base with more than 50,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) on 1 March 2018 (Al-Jazeera, 2018). From this attack, ISWAP killed number of soldiers and abducted two Muslim midwives who worked for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Hauwa Liman and Saifura Khorsa, and a Christian aid worker for UNICEF, Alice Ngaddah. It is noteworthy that ISWAP shot and killed Saifura Khorsa and Hauwa Liman in September and October 2018, respectively, rather than enslave them (Pearson & Zenn, 2021, p. 16). The group's justification for such action was that their work supported the military who were taking arms against ISWAP. Moreover, ISWAP might see any cooperation made by the Muslim women with the Nigerian military as apostates and irredeemable. Alice

Ngaddah, on the other hand, was declared as a slave and had worked as a nurse under ISWAP captivity (Pearson & Zenn, 2021, p. 15).

Based on several cases that have been outlined in this thesis, I could draw a comparison of how JAS and ISWAP instrumentalize women. It is clear that JAS abducted women and girls and used them as female suicide bombers, wives, and slaves. JAS also asked for ransom in exchange for the abducted women and girls to the government. Moreover, women in JAS play role as both combatant and supporter in the group. On the contrary, ISWAP released all their captives, enslaved those who are non-Muslims, and executed those who are apostates. In ISWAP, women only can have a supportive role inside the group, unlike JAS, ISWAP did not use women as suicide bombers or allow them to carry attack. Furthermore, ISWAP projected an appearance of theological justification for the execution of particular women; JAS, on the other hand, has abused a wider group of Muslim women through abduction or coerced suicide attacks. With that being said, the JAS has adopted a much broader definition of apostasy, which has resulted in the capture a much greater number of Muslim women and civilians. While ISWAP has taken a different stance and sought to portray itself as less hardline. ISWAP has generally avoided abducting Muslim women from their communities yet acknowledged only two abductions of Muslim women as mentioned earlier.

Table 2: Groups comparison in instrumentalizing women

Groups	Abduction	Female suicide bombers	Slavery	Execution	Forced marriage
JAS	Yes, including Muslim women and girls who considered as 'apostates'	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
ISWAP	Yes, released Muslim women and girls, detained the non-Muslims.	No	Only the non-Muslims who refuse to convert	Yes, only those who considered as 'apostates'	Yes

4.3.2 The Roles of Female Members in JAS and ISWAP

In this thesis, I have outlined that women have played active roles in insurgency movements, including in Boko Haram where they appear to have participated as 'victims' as well as 'perpetrators'. In accordance with the previous section, women's engagement in Boko Haram reflects the instrumentalization of women in its operations and ideology, both as victims and perpetrators.

Initially, in examining women's participation as victims, it is not necessarily only about women as a target of the attack, but there are three dynamics that can be discerned based on the previous section. First, the use of coercion which could include forceful indoctrination into radical ideology, threats to the women's lives and their families, and/or the use of drugs and hypnosis. These coercive elements distinguish women's participation as victims from the voluntary nature of participation (Usman, Taraboulsi-McCarthy, & Hawaja, 2020, p. 208). It is notable that ISWAP used forceful indoctrination strategy in Dapchi kidnapping case. ISWAP kidnapped 110 girls, then preached to them to repent their apostasy as they received Western education, then released them immediately afterwards. On the other hand, JAS tend to manipulate the girls and women, drugged, and coerced them into suicide missions (UNICEF, 2017, p. 12). They also threaten women's lives and their families by attacking villages, kidnapping the girls, and asking for ransom or they will take their daughters to marry them or kill them. Nevertheless, it does not rule out the possibility that JAS also forcefully asked the women they captured to follow their ideology. In some rare cases, the group isolated those women who are neither killed nor able to escape in a large building and they are given a Qur'an schooling, essentially preparing them for marriage to JAS's fighters and socializing them into the sect (Matfess, 2017, pp. 205-206).

Second, sometimes forced participation is driven by the necessity of having women who are able to fill the traditional role of companions as well as for tactical military expediency in supporting combatant roles (Matfess, 2017, p. 206). As the abductees of JAS who were interviewed by organizations and researchers have revealed[6], they were forced to marry the fighters, perform domestic chores or as slaves, and train to use arms and bombs to conduct attacks. ISWAP, in contrast, only enslaved those who refused to convert to Islam and do not allow women to engage in combatant roles, at least until 2018.

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[6] See the interview testimonials on section 4.3.1

Third, as I have discussed earlier in this thesis, forced participation also reflects the changes in JAS's operations and ideology to instrumentalize women in the insurgency as a response to government imprisoning the fighters' wives and children. Apparently for ISWAP, their operation is contrasting JAS because they are ideologically different. Thus, due to the evolving combat strategies of the insurgents, women have been co-opted into various roles in the insurgency that seem motivated by pragmatic imperatives for companions and other traditional roles (Usman, Taraboulsi-McCarthy, & Hawaja, 2020, p. 210). Therefore, based on the time frame used in this thesis, 2002-2018, I argue that JAS victimizes women more than ISWAP.

In terms of women's participation as perpetrators, Cragin and Daly (2009) categorized five active roles that women could play in insurgent groups (Cragin & Daly, 2009):

a) Logisticians: their mission is to transport money and weapons to various terrorist cells where these items are usually concealed so, they can be smuggled past security officials.

b) Recruiters: their responsibility is to recruit new members by exploiting family ties or through any other personal relationship, which often times are women.

c) Suicide bombers: as the one who carries out the attack.

d) Operational leaders and fighters who carry weapons during combat.

e) Political vanguards: as the strategic thinkers in the group or senior leaders in terrorist cells.

In the context of female members in JAS, evidence suggests that they engage in the first four roles with a strong claim that the group do not give a leadership position to women, as previously discussed (see Table 1). This argument also supported by the existing interviews with the victims and the female task forces who have revealed the truth of living under the shadow of Boko Haram. Firstly, the role of female members as logisticians could be seen in their role as a woman to conceal and transport weapon and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to other Boko Haram's operational camps. Based on the interview of three female Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) members, JAS's female members also carry out intelligence gathering and bait security forces to be ambushed by rebel forces, and they found a pistol strapped to the thigh of a woman in the market (Usman, Taraboulsi-McCarthy, & Hawaja, 2020, p. 211). Secondly, in recruitment itself, female members have role to be involved in preaching as a way to recruit other women, especially young girls. This role is usually undertaken by the wives of the commanders or the high-

rank JAS's fighters where they lure those young girls to be married off to male fighters (Usman, Taraboulsi-McCarthy, & Hawaja, 2020, p. 211). Female members in JAS as suicide bombers and fighters are well-documented and served as their combat tactic and the expediency of using women (See previous section), yet there was relatively little evidence of women operating as operational leaders that could be verified.

While the topic on the role of female members in JAS has been extensively researched, it is difficult to find the role of female members in ISWAP as comprehensive as in JAS. However, based on the data that I have gathered for this thesis, it is apparent that women's role in ISWAP is limited, not as varied as in JAS. For instance, women are not allowed to carry attacks in ISWAP hence, the jihadist group does not have female suicide bombers in the group. This argument is backed with evidence from the Tony Blair Institute's Global Extremism Monitor (GEM) which shows no record of suicide attacks attempted or committed by women, which indicates that the faction has continually adhered to their ideology at least until 2018 (Bryson & Bukarti, 2018; Institute for Global Change, 2018). According to ISWAP's ideology, the group condemns the use of women and girls to commit acts of violence hence, the likelihood of women and girls have roles as suicide bombers, operational leaders, even political vanguards is relatively little verifiable evidence or almost non-existence up to 2018.

However, one cannot deny the fact that women are allowed to have a supporter role in the group. For instance, I mentioned on the previous section about Christian detainees who refused to convert were kept by ISWAP fighters to serve as slaves, as well as an aid worker who worked as a nurse for the group (See section 4.3.1). Moreover, women in ISWAP have their own way of recruiting other women to join the group. A researcher from Crisis Group interviewed a Nigerian security official who reported that ISWAP women are advising their relatives living in camps in Maiduguri to relocate to the Lake Chad area so that, they may earn decent wages as agricultural labourers there, as well as having the opportunity to meet their spouses (Group, 2019, p. 18). Women, therefore, economically dependent on ISWAP whether voluntarily or coerced to generate income. Economic reasons can be a tactic for recruiting women, especially by giving them supportive roles in the group.

Overall, even though Shekau's faction uses women mostly only for attacking, both factions rely on women for making sure the movement has a future. Women are recognized as being important by both factions, but neither faction gives women leadership positions in the

organization. In order to make this point clear, it is important to stress that, like other jihadi groups, JAS, and ISWAP subordinate women regardless.

5 Discussion

5.1 Analysis and Findings

To re-assert, this thesis explored the research question:

Why does one jihadist group have more female members than other jihadist groups?

This thesis aimed to identify the explanatory factors that explain the variation in number of female members in jihadist groups. Based on the paired comparison case study of two local jihadist group factions in Nigeria, *Jama'tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad* (JAS) and the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) coupled with the existing literature on women in armed groups, I theorize that two explanatory factors help explain the variance in female members inside Boko Haram factions. Broadly speaking, these explanatory factors are divided into two: (1) individual-level factors, and (2) group-level factors. In this section, I will discuss the findings of each factor in accordance with the case study and the hypotheses acquired from the existing studies.

5.1.1 Individual-Level Factors

First, this thesis applied Viterna's approach for analyzing the individual factors that drive women's mobilization into an armed group: *pull, push,* and *persuaded* factors (Viterna, 2006). It is important to note that her research discussed about left-wing armed group (Viterna, 2006; Viterna, 2013). The individual factors of women joining left-wing armed group are different from women joining jihadist group. It is clear that the left-wing groups uphold women's equality and liberation and view patriarchy as a key source of women's oppression (Goldstein, 1980, pp. 330-331; Wood & Thomas, 2017, p.34). In this analysis, I will test three aforementioned factors in the context of women in Boko Haram factions. By the end of this section, I will produce new findings regarding individual factors of women joining JAS and ISWAP.

5.1.1.1 Pull Factors

The first of Viterna's approach is *pull* in which the politicized women are *pulled* by the strong belief in the ideology and the political causes of the group. In her research, it is more likely that one sees more female members in left-wing armed groups compared to others since leftist ideology propose women's equality and liberation which see that patriarchy is a key source of women's oppression (Goldstein, 1980, pp. 330-331; Wood & Thomas, 2017, p.34). The result of Viterna's research surprisingly demonstrated that a mere seven out of 38 guerrilla women cited political reasons as the primary motivation for their participation (Viterna, 2006, p. 20).

In this study, I tested *pull* factor with the case study of two local Islamist factions of Boko Haram and found that ISWAP was more likely to gain more popular support and trust from the local than JAS. However, one needs to consider the fact that this study does not conduct an in-depth individual interview and consequently is not able to comprehensively confirm whether there was politicized women in each group. Yet, based on the case that has been presented in this thesis, it appeared that: First, ISWAP has garnered support from local civilians as the group enabled neglected villages in the area and islands in Lake Chad to develop as sources of income for the civilians. Second, women in ISWAP showed their supports to the group by suggesting their relatives to migrate to the area controlled by ISWAP for better salary and job opportunities, as well as living closer to their spouses (Group, 2019, p. 18). Third, based on ISWAP's ideology, they did not attack civilians, especially Muslims, and as a result to that, the locals' perception towards Boko Haram was that ISWAP is less brutal faction of Boko Haram compared to JAS. Thus, in the case of ISWAP, women were seemingly *pulled* into a jihadist group due to socioeconomic opportunities and there was no evidence of the ideological or political beliefs. These findings are echoing Kalyvas's study on the alternative explanations how rebel groups get support from local population (Kalyvas, 2015).

Prior to Shekau-led Boko Haram, under Yusuf, the young women were interested to join the movement because they saw the opportunity to deepen their understanding about Qur'an and learning Arabic. Here, I argue that the *pull* factor is not because those women supported Boko Haram's ideology. I assume that those young women did not even understand the ideology of Boko Haram, but they joined merely because the group offered the opportunity to obtain an education. It was proven in the case study as well that Yusuf-led Boko Haram was essentially a vocal Islamic Movement calling for people to learn more about Qur'an and purified Islam practices.

In this analysis I will not talk further on the *pull* factors under Shekau's leadership. A particular reason for that is because I do not find any crucial factors that might *pull* women to join the sect. According to the case study in this thesis, it seemed that the gender ideology has altered under Shekau. Women who joined the group seemed like they did not possess strong ideological or political beliefs that were in line with JAS's ideological belief. It is proven that most of the female members in JAS joined the sect to seek for retribution, follow their husbands, or have been indoctrinated by the group.

Table 3: Women's *pull* factor to join jihadist groups

Group	Pull factors
JAS	Opportunity to obtain Islamic education.
ISWAP	Socioeconomic

Therefore, in this thesis, I claimed that it is difficult to reveal whether there were politicized women who had strong political and ideological stances who were *pulled* to join the jihadist groups due to the limitation of having interviews. However, this study finds that the *pull* factor that mobilize women to participate in jihadist groups is not because of the women's support on groups' ideological and political belief, and *vice versa*. I believe that the jihadist groups which could provide opportunity and accommodate the needs of women are the *pull* factors that could mobilize women to join the jihadist groups. With that, *pull* factors of women to join jihadist groups are not always related to *politicized women,* but it is related to the important values for women which intersect with certain aspects that the groups can accommodate, for instance, education or socioeconomic values.

5.1.1.2 Push Factors

During Shekau's leadership, the *pull* factor seems vague. The case study has demonstrated that women tend to join JAS to seek for protection and a guaranteed safety in which such motives are more inclined to *push* factor. According to Viterna, the reluctant women were *pushed* to join armed groups because it was not possible for them to escape a crisis through any other means due to lack of resources or networks (Viterna, 2006, p. 24). The lack of resources to escape from the crisis,

women join armed groups to get protection from brutality (Ola T. , 2020). In the North-Eastern Nigeria, women mostly did not have the capacity to rescue themselves from the crisis and the brutality from JAS fighters. Yet, to "liberate"[7] themselves and be granted for security and protection by JAS through marriage. For this matter, first, I am talking about those women who decided to voluntarily join into the sect. In the testimonial from the interviews, some girls had revealed that they, in fact, willingly married to JAS insurgents for food, security, and relieving their family from their burdens.

In addition, *push* factor according to Viterna also occurs due to threats to family or community, internal displacement, and government repression. According to the World Bank report, families who live in the volatile area of Northern Nigeria, especially where Boko Haram operated, are living in the poor condition (Bank, 2017). In this case, it is apparent that government incompetency in Nigeria has resulted to poverty and armed groups brutality in North-Eastern Nigeria are the main threats to family. It is also worth to note that as a consequence of the repressive character of social and political norms in Nigeria, particularly in the northern part, has limited women opportunities. In such situation, women were *pushed* into JAS both coercively and voluntarily. Not only were they exempted from JAS brutality once they married the fighters, but they have also lifted the burden in their families because JAS also gave sums of money to the girls' family as they took their daughters with them.

While marriage to JAS fighters seems to be the only way for women to escape from poverty and brutality of JAS fighters, women were *pushed* to join ISWAP due to uncertain economic circumstances, internal displacement, and government failure and repressive culture. However, it does not deny the fact that women also marry ISWAP's fighters to improve the quality of their lives. Many women migrate to the area where ISWAP governed to be closer to their spouses and get a better economic condition. I, therefore, argue that *push* factor here refers to the internal condition or situation of women that might push them to join the jihadist groups in order to get better condition because they might not have any other options or sources to escape the situation.

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[7] Liberate in the sense that women are free from being raped, kidnapped, and enslaved by JAS fighters, as well as free from hunger.

Table 4: Women's *push* factor to join jihadist groups

Group	Push factors
JAS	Insurgents' brutality, economic condition, internal displacement, family/relatives, and repressive culture.
ISWAP	Economic condition, internal displacement, repressive culture, and family/relatives

5.1.1.3 Persuaded Factors

In terms of *persuaded* factor, women who decided to join the sect considered as recruited members. These recruited women were persuaded and easily targeted by the recruiters from the groups, especially if they lived in a camp or populated community. Viterna discovered that the recruited women have different motivations than the politized and reluctant women that join the armed groups (Viterna, 2006, p. 29). In her research, there are two motivations of the recruited women; the willingness to have an adventure and a desire for retribution (Viterna, 2006, p. 28). The latter motivation agrees with Bloom who argued that women choose to take up arms to avenge the death of their family or close relatives for the brutality of armed forces (Bloom, 2010; Bloom, 2011). With that being said, one could argue that recruited female members are *persuaded* to join the sect not because they shared common ideologies or beliefs. They were rather identified by the absence of their personal constraints that may increase the costs to participate in the rebel groups, for example marriage or having a family, that is also known as *biographical availability*.

While in both research by Viterna (2006) and Bloom (2011) touched upon the discussion of recruited female's motivation as female fighters, in the case of Boko Haram, it appeared that the women who joined the group willingly were clueless about the term of female fighters. In fact, most of them admitted that they had never seen 'female fighters' in the sense of women taking up arms and participating in combat and were rather more familiar with the term of 'female suicide bombers' (Matfess, 2017, p. 226).

Speaking of the motivation of recruited female members and to analyze the *persuaded* factors, I investigate the testimonial interview from the girls in JAS regarding suicide bombing (See section 4.3.1.1). According to the interview, many women who participated as female suicide bombers were all volunteers. Most of them were widows and some were married couples who took

the mission. At that point, the sect gave them three months training to learn about their minds, before they were sent out on a mission. Persuasion then occurred during the training period which contained religious indoctrination. As a result, both women and girls were trapped and convinced that their actions to fight against an abusive state were allowed by religion. Therefore, what I could observe based on the information that I have gathered that: the motivation to participate in such a mission is mostly for revenge, for instance a young girl who had been a bomber because her mother had died (See section 4.3.1.1).

While desire for retribution appeared to be the main strong motivation of female members to be persuaded in joining JAS and becoming female suicide bombers, seeking for an adventure could be another motivation that should be highlighted as well. As I discuss about jihadist groups, I might assert that the adventure in this context could be perceived as *jihad* or the "Holy War". JAS members might persuade women or even their wives to participate in the group by giving them fantastical religious promises of how heroic and righteous it is to wage a war against the *kafirs*[8]*, corrupted and abusive government. This argument is supported by the statement from the female members in JAS who observed that Boko Haram was doing what the Prophet did– *jihad* (Matfess, 2017, p. 220). Several women insurgents in JAS even admitted to supporting the jihad in some cases, for an example, Aisha (the commander's wife) who confessed that at one point, she was in favor of violence against *kafirs* and wanted the whole of Nigeria to be an Islamic State (Matfess, 2017, p. 220).

In contrast to JAS, I found less convincing evidence on the factors driving women to be successfully persuaded to join ISWAP. As mentioned earlier, recruitment in ISWAP took place in the camp by the women who have already lived under ISWAP (Group, 2019, p. 18). In ISWAP's policy, it includes revitalizing rural trade to attract displaced people return to their homeland. The policy has supported the recruiters in the IDPs camp to ask people return to their homeland, that was under ISWAP's influence. For instance, the women or female recruiters advised their relatives to move from the camp in Maiduguri to the Lake Chad area, as well as promised them better wages and matrimonial opportunities. On top of that, it is worth noting that ISWAP has built a jihadist proto state by providing services to the local inhabitants and upholding law and justice. Thus, in IDPs camps, ISWAP's propaganda videos were circulated in an attempt to persuade uprooted

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[8] In Islam, Kafir(s) refers to someone or people who disbelieve in Allah (God) or the tenets of Islam, or also known as non-Muslim.

individuals to relocate under ISWAP's protection (Group, 2019, p. 18). In ISWAP's propaganda videos, it showed bountiful crops, fat cattle, and well-stocked markets (Group, 2019, p. 18). With such strategy, it was easy for both men and women to be lured into the sect.

Moreover, as to what I have written on case study, ISWAP seemed to have its own image and Islamic interpretation that distinguished them from the parent organization (Boko Haram / JAS) and the irresponsive Nigerian government, which had helped to attract people in general. As a result, ISWAP has been credited with bringing a drop in crime and provided economic sustenance in the Lake Chad area. With that in mind, I argue that women might fall for an improved socioeconomic condition promised by ISWAP. Socioeconomic motivation is also less related to 'adventure' or 'retribution.'

First, regarding adventure, I acknowledge that women had to migrate from a camp to an area controlled by a jihadist group and had allowed women to experience what it was like to live under a jihadist group. If, theoretically speaking, adventure refers to getting involved in combat roles as in Viterna's research, I argue that the rational for women to join ISWAP was mostly because they were convinced to return home, that was unfortunately governed by ISWAP, for merely a better socioeconomic condition and not seeking for adventure. This argument is further supported by the fact that women's role in ISWAP was limited as supporters in the group and they were not allowed to take up arms or commit attacks by the sect. Second, I argue that redemption is not the motivation for them to be persuaded in the group either to fight against the government or security forces. Although the idea of *jihad* was also present in the group, however, considering the limitation of women's role in ISWAP, they could not either commit *jihad* or to avenge the death of their family members. With that, women were easily persuaded to join jihadist groups because of their inner motivation to achieve improved socio-economic conditions.

Table 5: Women's *persuaded* factor to join jihadist groups

Group	Persuaded factor
JAS	Adventure and retribution
ISWAP	Socioeconomic

Nonetheless, due to lack of choice and high degree of anger with the government over the situation, especially in the IDPs camp, joining ISWAP could perceive as an alternative way for women to bandwagon to a jihadist group. Overall, I observe that *persuaded* factor refers to the recruited women who are persuaded by the recruiters, mostly in the camps, to join the rebel groups as "fighters" not as mere members. Persuaded factors in the case of jihadist groups also depends on the role that women can play in the sects. Therefore, it is more likely to find women driven by the motivation of seeking for an adventure and retribution in JAS rather than in ISWAP.

5.1.2 Group-Level Factor

In the group-level factors, this thesis notes that the two faction groups of Boko Haram conducted their operation contrasting each other. While JAS mostly recruited women forcefully, ISWAP, on the other hand, seemed to recruit women voluntarily. Recalling the research findings by Thomas and Bond (2015), who argued that with coercive recruitment, a rebel group is more likely to have female members. Henshaw's (2016) findings demonstrated the antithesis of Thomas and Bond (2015), rebel groups that have more active women participation appear to be recruited voluntarily as it has a clear political ideology. The gist of the two studies shows that recruitment strategy may affect the number of female members in a group. There are three factors that interrelate with recruitment: (1) trigger events, (2) leaders' perception, and (3) ideological orientation. At this juncture, I will discuss these three factors of the group level closely with the case study of the Boko Haram splinter groups.

5.1.2.1 Trigger Events

As discussed on the case study, Boko Haram began forcibly recruiting women after the death of the leader, Muhammad Yusuf. Under Shekau leadership, Boko Haram appeared to be more violent and based on what I can observe, there was a trigger event that might be the cause of the violent behavior of the group. I found that the insurgency between Boko Haram and the Nigerian security forces back in 2009 was the trigger event in this case. Technically speaking, Boko Haram's main opponent is the Nigerian government. It was clear that the political rulers who governed by secular laws were declared as apostates, according to Yusuf's interpretation of *takfir*. Consequently, he began his proselytize that had caused the movement of the group to be suspected of being a terrorist

movement by the security forces. The aftermath of the insurgency had catalyzed three things: (1) the death of its leader, Muhammad Yusuf, (2) Shekau's election as the group leader, and (3) many members detained by the security forces. This in turn instilled a feeling of anger and hatred among the group members towards the government. In consequence, after Shekau served as a leader, Boko Haram strategically exploited moments of collective outrage as the government had killed and detained their members, including their wives and children. Therefore, I argue that the trigger events created an opportunity for the jihadist group to adopt new form of violence that led to the surge of female members in the group.

In order to analyze this part, I adopted a theoretical premise that posited a trigger event is a mechanism used to enable norms to change (Ahmad, 2019, p. 86). On her study, Aisha Ahmad assumed that norm change is based on strategic priors and not as a motivation for changing norms per se (Ahmad, 2019). However, if one looks closer to the case in this thesis, the series of clashes between Boko Haram and the government did not end after the judicial killing of Muhammad Yusuf. The 2009 insurgency was the first trigger event that outraged Boko Haram. The second trigger event was in 2012 which was marked by the religion-based conflict between Christian and Muslim in the North of Nigeria. As a response, the security forces detained several Boko Haram members, including the wives and children of the commanders. However, it has proven that Shekau-led Boko Haram did not commit any act of violence against women until the government refused to release the detainees. Initially, Shekau had warned the Nigerian government through a video message in 2012 as shown in the case study (See section 4.2.1). As there was no cooperation from the government side, a year after the video was released, Boko Haram began kidnapping wives and children of the government officials. Boko Haram strategically held more women and girls' hostages as ransom to the government to return their wives and children, but it did not buy the government to return their wives in exchange.

Episodes after episodes of anger and desperation of Boko Haram from losing its members, children, and wives had led to the surged number of gendered violence and abuses committed by the group. The group further instrumentalized the abducted women and girls to serve the sect, as both combatant and supporters. In this case, I argue that first, women became an instrument of war by both Nigerian government and the jihadist group. Second, the case has proven that neither Boko Haram nor its members had any prior interest in gendered kidnapping before their wives were captured. The group started kidnapping women merely to enhance their bargaining position with

the government. Therefore, it leads me to conclude that the large number of female members in Shekau-led Boko Haram (JAS) was in consequence of the triggered events which had created the opportunity for the sect to adopt violence against women and girls as well as coercively recruited women and girls.

Moreover, as Boko Haram continuously operated violently and defy its own ideological beliefs, it had caused the fractionalization inside the group. In 2016, ISWAP separated from Shekau's leadership and stood alone. While JAS had its own clashes with the security forces, it has distracted the security forces from the operations carried out by ISWAP. The trigger event is perceived differently here, rather than a clash vis-à-vis the government, the trigger event is the confrontation between the other jihadist group (JAS) and the government or security forces. In this sense, JAS seemed to be the priority of the government. Thus, in contrast to JAS, ISWAP took advantage of the trigger event and saw the opportunity to establish legitimacy and gain support from the local population as Boko Haram continuously conducted attacks. Therefore, from 2016 until 2018, there is no evidence that trigger events in the context of ISWAP created the opportunity for the group to recruit women forcefully, but rather the opportunity to gain female members voluntarily. I have seen no norms change in ISWAP to act violently as the group was less pressured than JAS. With this in mind, I believe that trigger events could be seen as the opportunity for the jihadist groups to gain a surged number of female members, either coercively or voluntarily.

5.1.2.2 Leaders' Perception

Second factor that affect the variation in numbers of female members in jihadist groups is the leaders' perception. According to Wood, the dilemma of a group in recruiting woman is depending on the leader's perception (Wood, 2019). In her book, she found the evidence indicated that leadership decisions were made during periods of rapidly increasing conflict intensity and sharply increasing resource demand to expand or initiate women's recruitment (Wood, 2019, p. 294). Further, it is likely that leader's perception influences the group's decision of the extent to employ women. Wood argued that as the conflict intensifies, the prevalence of female combatants increased (Wood, 2019, p. 294). Supported by Wood's study, the case study in this thesis has proven that the leader's perception could affect the variation of the numbers of female members in jihadist group.

According to the case study, under the leadership of Muhammad Yusuf, Boko Haram did not recruit women to the group as there was no demand pressure from the group to have female members, especially female combatants. As I have elaborated in section 4.3, the way Yusuf attracted female followers was through Islamic education, such as Qur'an and Arabic studies. In order to integrate women or the existing female followers into the sect, Yusuf encouraged them to marry Boko Haram fighters. Under his leadership, women were only treated as wives or companions for the fighters, in other words, only as supporters in the group. However, as the conflict escalated between Boko Haram and the Nigerian government, there was a shifting inside Boko Haram which I have explained on the previous section. As Shekau came to power in the group, the leader's perception on gender matters have altered due to several circumstances i.e., violent confrontation between the group and the Nigerian security forces and the detention of the members along with the children and wives of the commanders. Acknowledging the casualties of the hostility with the security forces, the group's demand for combatants increased and as a form of revenge and rebellion, Shekau-led Boko Haram began recruiting women and employing them as female suicide bombers.

Furthermore, Shekau had to cite Qur'an to justify his action in employing female suicide bombers (Bukarti, 2017). He claimed that women were allowed to participate in attacks under exceptional circumstances. Despite the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of Islam, Shekau coercively recruited women and decisively engaged them into attacks. While under Yusuf women seemed to have support roles, Shekau employed women in both combatant and support roles. Regarding the employment of female suicide bombing, it was apparent that some women inside the group voluntarily associated themselves to suicide bombing, while several others were indoctrinated.

"*Some of those who go [to jihad] are widows and some are married and go with their husband*" – Aisha, 19-year-old, wife of Boko Haram commander (Matfess, 2017, p. 229).

After three months of training, the leader would supervise them whether they were ready or not before they decided to send them on a mission. With that in mind, the case of JAS has confirmed that leaders would decide whether they need to recruit women into the group based on their perception and strategic calculation on the circumstances that affect the number of members

in the group. In addition to this, I argue that leaders' perceptions also might change due to the presence of trigger events that allow the change of norms and perceptions of the leaders – which I discussed prior to this section. If the group experienced more pressure in the escalated conflict with fewer members in the group to both support and fight, the leaders would likely recruit women based on their perception of the circumstance.

On the other hand, ISWAP's leader, Abu Mushab al-Barnawi, perceived that women should not be engaged in violence, but rather to stay at home and they could have support roles in the group. A particular reason for that could because ISWAP, as drawn on the case study, was not under as much pressure as JAS. With that, there was no urgency for ISWAP to recruit women massively by force and instead, women join the group voluntarily. By the fact that ISWAP provided basic services and job opportunities to the population, it had attracted women to live under the control of ISWAP. In addition, the case of Dapchi girls kidnapping in 2018 was not even authorized by the leader because the directives of ISWAP leader not to harm Muslim civilians. Thus, ISWAP only enslaved a non-Muslim girl and married the Muslim women. With such perceptions of the leader, first, ISWAP received supports from women for being in noncombat roles. Secondly, recruiting a large number of female members was not a priority for ISWAP's leader considering the group was not in an intensive battle vis-à-vis the security forces. Therefore, it was less likely to see ISWAP used coercive measures to recruit women into the sect.

While both JAS and ISWAP leaders agreed to have women in their groups, the decision to what extent they will employ women in the group depends on the leaders themselves. Similarly, whether they want to recruit more women to the group and how many they will have in the group also depend on leaders' perceptions. It is also worth noting that recruiting women also can be a cost for the groups hence, it is more reasonable to see the leaders recruit more women if the group itself is understaffed in intensified war. Thus, in this thesis I argue that leader's perception is one of the main factors that affects the variation in the number of female members in jihadist groups.

5.1.2.3 Ideological Orientation

The last factor that I will analyze here is the group's ideological orientation. A study has revealed that rebel groups with religious ideologies consistently exclude female combatants, despite mounting conflict costs and difficulties in recruiting (Wood, 2019, p. 295). In addition to that,

ideological orientation could further explain on how the group incorporates women as well as group's operational strategy and tactic that might lead to different numbers of female members in jihadist groups. In this thesis, I draw on a case study of two groups that have an Islamic ideology and under the same umbrella of Nigerian jihadist group, Boko Haram. Although both groups shared similar ideology, I posit that each group have a different interpretation of Islam and their operational approach depends on their interpretation of their own ideology. Boko Haram's main factions' ideologies differed significantly after the 2016 split, particularly regarding whose targets are viable for violence and what roles women can play. With this in mind, one could expect a variation in the number of female members between JAS and ISWAP.

At this juncture, I highlight the main ideological beliefs of Boko Haram from 2002 to 2009 under the leadership of Muhammad Yusuf. Based on the ideological debate that has been elaborated in the case study, it is apparent that the interpretation of *takfir* could determine how the group would operate. According to Yusuf, prior to declaring the political rulers who governed by secular laws as apostates, the Islamic evidence should be established first. Thus, in 2004, he gradually began his first mission to proselytize and *dawah* (Islamic preaching). Muhammad Yusuf had adopted the *dawah* as the main pillar of Islamic jihad strategy and as one of the major features of radical Islam in the Muslim world. While the name of Boko Haram implied that western education is unlawful or forbidden, according to Jacob Zenn, preaching about western education is forbidden was Yusuf's secondary focus (Zenn, 2020, p. 2). He mainly preached about jihad, the establishment of a Muslim state, Nigerian and Western abuses of Muslims, and the immorality of constitutional democracy (Zenn, 2020, p. 2). Through his *dawah,* he attracted female followers with an alluring method, such as learning Qur'an and Arabic as well as bounding them into marriage.

Therefore, I argue that Boko Haram under Yusuf was merely a radical Islamic movement calling for Quranic studies and purified Islam practice. The ideological orientation of Yusuf-led Boko Haram focused on proselytizing which triggered the 2009 insurgency between Boko Haram and the security forces. In such case, I posit that female members joined the group willingly only to learn Qur'an and Arabic. Moreover, consistent with Wood (2019), despite the clash in 2009 with the security forces, the group persists in excluding women as combatants. Female combatant is not the only focus in this thesis, but female members in general. Thus, what I can observe is that despite the female followers the group had gained, recruiting a large number of female members,

especially as combatants did not seem to be a top priority of Boko Haram under Yusuf. Female members under Yusuf seemed to have support roles only.

Boko Haram further transformed into a terrorist group under Shekau after the extra judicial assassination of Yusuf. The group's ideological orientation has shifted into more violent. Based on prior analysis in this study, the tendency of a group to adopt new forms of violence is due to the trigger events. I have explained that the trigger event, in this case, was the confrontation between Shekau-led Boko Haram and the Nigerian security forces which had led the group to adopt new tactic and strategy for instance, kidnapping women. However, it also supported the ideological orientation of the group that has shifted as the leadership changed. As noted in the letter that was issued in 2011 regarding Shekau's ideological deviation, the group has fallen into a radical leader with a more radical belief compared to Yusuf. Shekau himself has a strong radical belief that he even criticized Yusuf for being too liberal (Afolabi & Yusuf, 2019, p. 75). First, Shekau disregarded the principal rule of *takfir* and targeted every Muslim and non-Muslim who disagree with Boko Haram's worldview. This could tell how the group operated under Shekau. Shekau attacked and killed everyone who against Boko Haram's ideology in the name of jihad, while ideologically speaking, proselytizing is important to establish Islamic evidence before engaging in jihad. Second, gender-based violence as the new strategy in Shekau-led Boko Haram. Shekau's ideological beliefs allowed him to recruit women as combatants which was controversial. He began to instrumentalize women by coercively recruiting them i.e., abducted them from school, separated them from their families, and forced marriage. Under JAS, women's participation in the group as members served as both supporters and combatants.

Therefore, after Shekau took the leadership, I found that: first, the large number of female members in Boko Haram was due to different ideological orientation between Yusuf and Shekau. Unlike Yusuf-led Boko Haram, Shekau-led has allowed brutality and new tactic to recruit women forcefully. Second, considering the transformation in Boko Haram after Yusuf, I posit that ideological orientation of a group also depends on the leader and how the leader interprets the ideology itself. Lastly, I argue that the case of JAS or Shekau-led Boko Haram is an anomaly to Wood's study that asserted religious ideologies consistently exclude female combatants, despite mounting conflict costs and difficulties in recruiting. This analysis has proven that JAS with religious ideology, in contrast, has included female combatants as a result of the frustration of an

intensive battle with the rival (in JAS case it was the government and/or security forces) and lack of human resources inside the group due to detention or killed in combat.

Shekau's ideological deviations have created fractionalization inside Boko Haram. For instance, some of its members formed a new group separated from Boko Haram in 2012 called Ansaru due to disagreement on targeting Muslim civilians. Another split occurred in 2016 where ISWAP decided to detach from Shekau leadership due to a long-standing ideological agreement with Shekau-led Boko Haram and appointed Abu Musab al-Barnawi as a leader instead. In contrast to JAS, the interpretation of Islamic ideology in ISWAP was rather more subtle. Both groups believe in waging jihad against the apostates, however, the interpretation of apostates according to ISWAP were the non-Muslims and people who support the government and the West. JAS, as mentioned, referred apostates to those who are not on board with Boko Haram's ideological orientation. Therefore, one could observe different operational tactics and strategies between JAS and ISWAP. First, ISWAP gained its support by providing delivery service to the neglected communities in the Lake Chad area and offering justice and mercy (repentance) for Muslims. It is notable that the group still used violent and coercive methods from time to time, for example in order to get its legitimacy in Lake Chad territory, ISWAP had to wage a guerilla war in the North-eastern Nigeria and on the Lake Chad's periphery. However, based on its ideological beliefs, ISWAP's modus operandi was only targeting the military to seize arms without harming the civilians. With that, the group have successfully managed to gain a positive image from the local perception.

"*Dawla (a reference to ISWAP) is trying to be friendly to people. They don't kill…They insist that jihad is not against people who say 'la illahailla Allah' [the first words of the shahada, the Islamic creed]. Only against people in uniforms*" – Local Fulani herdsmen (Group, 2019, p. 18).

Second, in regard to women, ISWAP ideologically believed that women should not be engaged in combatant roles. Moreover, the need for female members in the group were merely as supporters to provide the group with the support roles, for example as wives, cookers, nurses, etc. It is also worth to mention about how ISWAP's ideology dealt with Dapchi kidnapping case. As mentioned in case study, ISWAP abducted at least 110 schoolgirls in 2018 who were mostly

Muslims and only one Christian. The kidnapping was executed without the authorization from the leader himself. According to ISWAP's ideology, they would not harm Muslims civilians and it was apparent that ISWAP was committed to their ideological orientation by returning 104 schoolgirls to their home while enslaving one Christian girl as she refused to convert to Islam. Moreover, ISWAP claimed that the objectives from that kidnapping was to make the schoolgirls repent their apostasy of receiving western education. However, there was also a case where ISWAP killed Muslim women instead of enslaving them. They worked as the ICRC midwives who were accused by ISWAP supporting the military who against them and what the women did was considered as apostates, according to ISWAP. In my point of view, if ISWAP stood for its ideological orientation to not attack Muslims, instead of killing these midwives, ISWAP could have them to repent just like Dapchi schoolgirls. In another case, ISWAP enslaved a Christian aid worker from UNICEF who had served as a nurse under ISWAP. From what I have discussed in the case study as well, it was apparent that ISWAP always followed its ideological belief and were strict about apostates.

Therefore, based on ideological orientation analysis, I argue that: first, considering the group did not detain the women they had kidnapped and made them as 'weapons' for jihad, ISWAP might gain female members voluntarily who were utilized by the group as supporters. Second, despite the confrontation between ISWAP and the security forces, ISWAP excluded women and girls from combatant role.

To conclude this section, I argue that the ideological orientation of the jihadi group does not necessarily affect the number of female members. I find that the ideological orientation in jihadi groups is fairly identical to each other, for instance Yusuf-led Boko Haram and ISWAP. What should put into account is that how the leader interprets the ideology itself, in this case is that how the leaders of Boko Haram factions interpreted the Islamic laws, particularly in terms of jihad. Thus, one could still identify the presence of female members in jihadi groups. However, it is likely that jihadi group led by a leader with a radical interpretation of the ideology might have more female members as they also served as combatants in the group.

5.2 Limitation and Further Research

This study has limitations on its choice of methodology and case study as discussed in section 3.4. hence, this study is not generalizable. In this section, I identify a general limitation on the analysis of this thesis and the potential future research that could fill the gap and foster the analysis of the study in similar topic and/or field.

By being more inclined to group factors, this study lacks evidence to support the individual factors which could have fostered the analysis and discussion of the thesis. The main reason for that is this thesis does not have the capacity to prove the individual level factors that affect women's preference in participating in one group over the others. In order to provide a better explanation to that, I believe that this study requires to conduct an in-depth interview with the women inside the jihadist groups which is time consuming and difficult to pursue for a master's-level thesis. This is also one of the constraints of desk research as I only analyze the existing interviews. It is, therefore, hard to tell the individual factors of the women since the existing testimonials from the women are only leading to a certain information that could only support a specific goal of a research, which is different than the aim of this thesis, i.e., the formulation of the questions that were being asked.

At the group-level, this thesis finds that the study on Boko Haram has been covered extensively. On the contrary, ISWAP as a faction of the group itself is still under research. Due to lack of data on female members in local jihadist groups has heretofore limited researchers' ability to examine further.

Therefore, the finding of this thesis suggested that there is a need to further research on women and gender aspect in jihadist groups, particularly on the female members in ISWAP. Ultimately, qualitative study is insufficient to provide a comprehensive analysis on the factors that affect the different variation in the number of female members in one jihadist group over the others, hence this research merits further quantitative exploration on this matter.

6   Conclusion

In order to answer my research question: *Why does one jihadist group have more female members than other jihadist groups?* I examined several explanatory factors that affect the variation in the number of female members in jihadist groups. These factors come from the individual level and group level factors. To analyze, I drew on similar system paired comparison study on the factions of Boko Haram, JAS, and ISWAP, from 2002 to 2018. By using qualitative method, I heavily relied on the existing data sources, interviews, and studies of women in Boko Haram and its factions. I then tested the hypotheses of the individual and group factors based on the selected case.

In the individual level, there are three factors that need to be considered: *pull, push,* and *persuaded.* In my analysis, I found a contrasting finding to Viterna. I argued that *pull* factor that mobilized women joining the jihadist groups is not because of the ideology and political belief of the women are similar to groups' ideological beliefs or because the women are strong supporters of the political causes of the group. Women are rather to be pulled to the jihadist groups because of the opportunity that the women seek. In Yusuf-led Boko Haram, for example, women seemed to join the sect because of women's eagerness to obtain Islamic education which was an opportunity offered by the sect. As in ISWAP, they offered the opportunity to get better socioeconomic conditions for women. Hence, women tend to be pulled into a jihadist group that could provide for their needs.

Secondly, I found stronger evidence that women tend to join jihadist groups due to push factors instead of pull factors which is consistent with Viterna's hypothesis. The *push* factors suggested that women might be pushed to join jihadist groups due to brutality from the insurgent groups, the socioeconomic conditions, and families and/or relatives. My findings further suggested that women who joined either JAS or ISWAP were pushed by relatively similar aforementioned factors as both groups were based in the similar area, Northeast Nigeria and Lake Chad Basin. Therefore, one could identify many reluctant women decided to become female members in jihadist groups simply because they do not have capacity or resources to escape from the crisis.

Lastly in the individual level, recruited female members were persuaded to join JAS because they had the willingness to have an adventure, in this context is jihad, and a desire for retribution. This finding is consistent with Viterna's hypothesis. However, in this thesis I found that women were persuaded to join ISWAP because of the socioeconomic motivations from the

women and supported by the influence from the recruiters who promised them better socioeconomic conditions. ISWAP also demonstrated their propaganda videos in IDPs camps that showed bountiful crops, fat cattle, and well-stocked markets as well as provided public services, matrimonial opportunities, and upheld law and justice. As ISWAP limited the women's role as members in the group as supporters, it is plausible that persuaded factors in the case of jihadist groups also depends on the role that women can play in the sects. Therefore, it is more likely to find recruited female members who were driven by the motivation of seeking for an adventure and retribution in JAS rather than in ISWAP. While female members were recruited in ISWAP driven by socioeconomic motivations.

As in group level factors, there are three main factors that I analyzed in this thesis: trigger events, leaders' perception, and ideological orientation. From all the three factors, I found that first, trigger events that caused changes of the norms of jihadist group, particularly in terms of violence, could lead to the surged female members in the group. Second, leaders' perception played a key role in determining the numbers of female members in the group. This argument is supported by the fact that the decision to what extent the group will employ women as combatants and how many women should be recruited into the group depend on the leader. It is interesting to note that the leader's perception is related to the group's ideological orientation. Both JAS and ISWAP are jihadist groups with similar ideology, however, how the groups interpret the Islamic ideology that they uphold are different. My finding is contradicting with Wood's hypothesis that argued rebel groups with religious ideologies consistently exclude female combatants, despite mounting conflict costs and difficulties in recruiting. This study has proven that Shekau-led Boko Haram as a jihadist group with a religious ideology did not exclude female combatants. By doing so, the group has deviated from its ideological orientation. Yusuf-led Boko Haram and ISWAP, on the other hand, matched the hypothesis. Therefore, even though the groups have similar ideologies, ideological orientation could be shifted due to the leader's interpretation of the group's ideology itself. With that, it is likely that jihadi group led by a leader with a radical interpretation of the ideology might have more female members as they also served as combatants in the group.

In sums, I argue that group level factors play a more significant role to the large number of female members inside the group than the individual level factors. This is because the presence of female members in the groups, eventually, depend on the groups, particularly the leaders' perception and the ideological orientation. While group level factors are significantly affect the

variation in the number of female members in jihadist groups, it does not rule out the importance to examine further the individual level factors. However, it remains unclear which group of Boko Haram factions has more female members than the other. This thesis aimed to analyze the factors that might affect the variation in the numbers of female members in jihadist groups, not to identify which jihadist group has more female members than the others.

Therefore, further research into this topic and this field is needed, specifically: (1) build a comprehensive dataset on female members in Boko Haram factions, especially for ISWAP, (2) further exploration and analysis on the individual level factors in ISWAP, (3) mixing or using quantitative approach into the analysis, (4) large-n study in analyzing the variation of female members in jihadist groups, and (5) as I argue that leaders' perception played a key role in determining female members inside the groups, further research idea could touch upon "how the group's leadership influenced the number of female members in jihadist groups. At last, this study contributes to expand research on the gender aspect of the local-based religious rebel groups that are mostly understudied.

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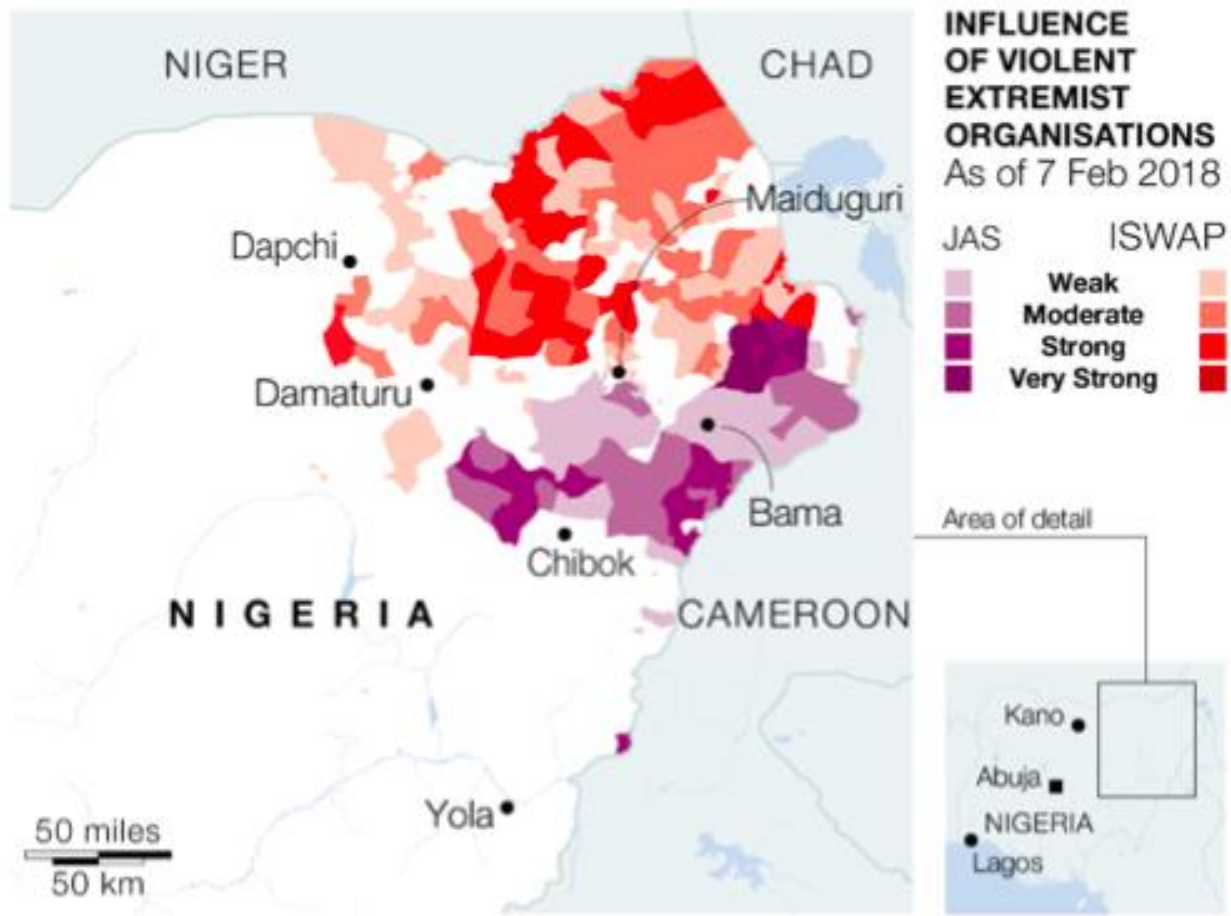# A   Appendix

Figure A. 1. Map of Lake Chad Basin
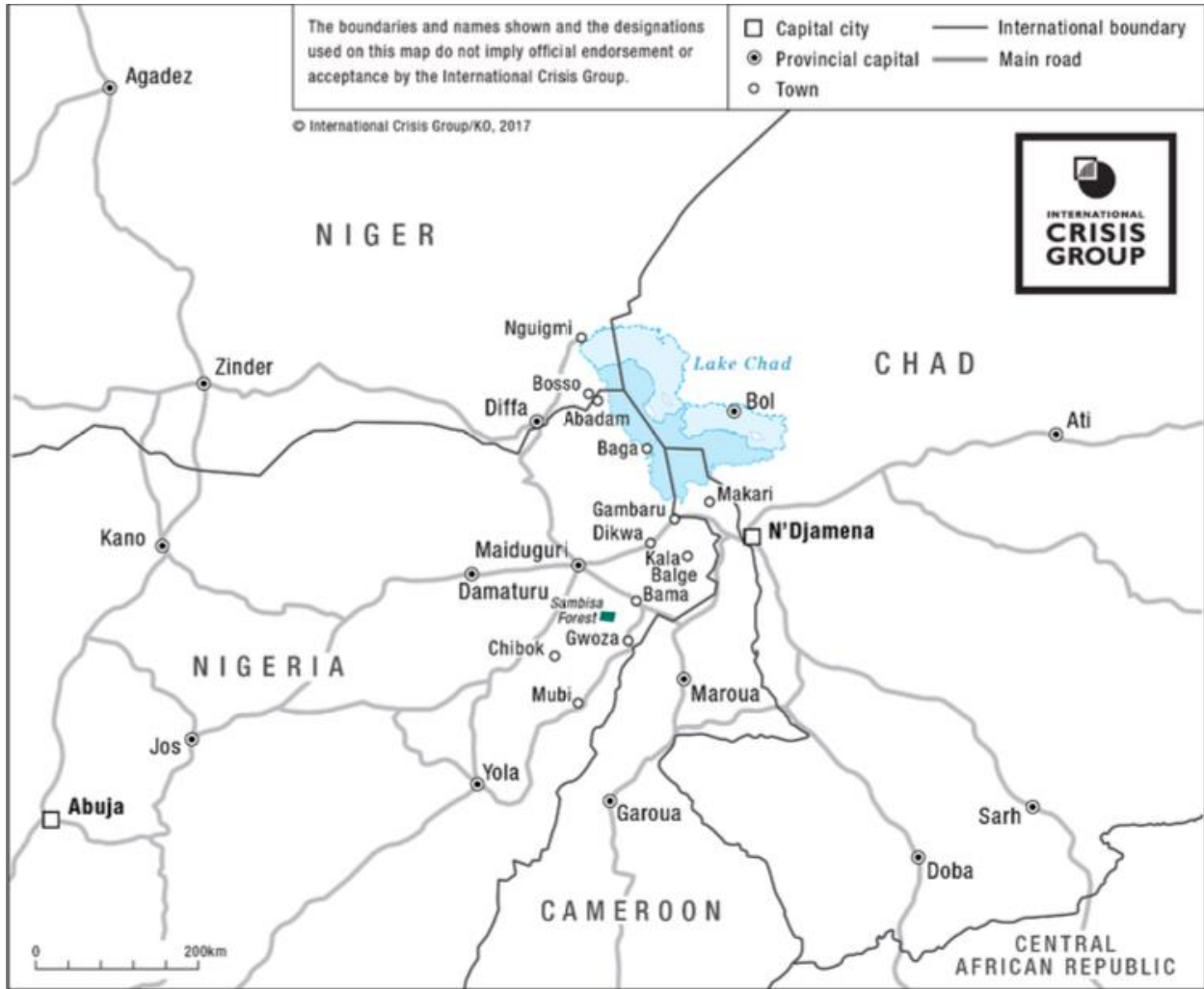
Source: International Crisis Group

Figure A. 2. Map of Nigeria

Figure A. 3. JAS and ISWAP Zones of Influence

Source: International Crisis Group

Figure A. 4. The Explanatory Model