Mothers Speak of the Effects of Terrorism on Children's Education, Psychological Wellbeing, Mothers' Strengths, and Resilience: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Terrorism has been an escalating major challenge that hindered the quality of life, including well-being, schooling, and local economic fabric. The existing knowledge base however suggests that mothers have not yet spoken enough of their accounts of terrorists' activities on their families. The purpose of the present study was to gain insight into mothers' versions of the impacts of terrorism on mothers and their progenies. To conduct this study, a multiphase thematic analysis was utilized to scrutinize qualitative data collected from 26 victimized mothers. Data were collected and analyzed until saturation was noticed. These data yielded contextual and individuals' characteristics that mothers ascribed to terrorism. The following enriching and poignant themes emerged: disruption of education, increased dependency, behavior variations, psychological damages, financial struggles, and mothers' strategies, strengths, and resilience. Results were discussed based on the Capability Approach framework, the existing findings, and mothers' context-specific realities. It was furthermore suggested that future research should consider the mediated effects of social and economic-specific contexts on terrorism-related casualties to better understand its effects on the victimized mothers and their children. Recommendations were made for women and their children to benefit from near psychological services during the occurrence or absence of major traumatic events.

Keywords: *Terrorism, Disruption of Education, Psychological Disorders, Strength and Resilience, Coping Strategies.*

Introduction

Terrorism has been considered and defined as the thoughtful and governmentally-driven utilization of ferocity against civilian targets by groups of individuals or covert agents. It was discussed that usually terrorists aim to influence an audience (Krueger & Maleckova, 2003).

Findings of current research in the existing knowledge base on terrorist threats and casualties provided limited insight into the reasons behind the escalating activities of terrorist groups. Over the years, researchers have attempted to clarify how these groups expand their strategies and the associated destructions. It was hypothesized that some of these methods could be attributed to external factors, such as inter-organizational competitions, or internal factors like the ideologies of terrorist groups (Mroszczyk & Abrahms, 2021).

Over the past 10 years, the West African Sahel region has undergone the development and spread of terrorist groups that have brought about substantial disruptions to social cohesions, dislodgments of government officials, difficulties to armed forces, obliterations of the economic fabrics, alongside the death of unarmed innocents and governmental loyal armed forces. The damages were found to extend to social features that are typical of Western countries and cultures, comprising the Western education systems (Benedikter & Ouedraogo, 2019). In the beginning, terrorism was instigated from Mali and then spread throughout its neighboring country Burkina Faso, predominantly disturbing the northern regions of the Sahel and eastern of the landlocked state (Tapsoba et al., 2021). Nsaibia and Weiss (2018) emphasized that terrorists have assaulted and disrupted people's lives by aiming at government and educational facilities within the Sahel areas, disclosing substantial differences between social systems and traditions in the area (Raynaut, 2001). The Sahelian cultures were labeled as miscellaneous, with its people encouraging diversity and flexibility, but current disasters, encompassing climate change, quick population growth,

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impoverishment, and backwardness have additionally confronted the region (Batterbury & Warren, 2001; Kwasi et al., 2019).

In 2021, terrorist groups required the shutting of 2,923 schools in the regions under their control in Burkina Faso, affecting 424,014 schoolchildren, including 223,317 males (55.7%) and 200,697 females (47.3%). Subsequently, 12,478 instructors were repositioned to safer villages (MENA-PLN, 2021). The dislodgment of millions of populations from the Sahel provinces, attended by school-age children, has brought about critical interruptions in education in Burkina Faso. It was asserted that more than 9,514 students ran away from their residence areas, resulting in the deprivation of their right to education (Amnesty International, 2021). Schoolchildren and their teachers have been confronted by recurrent and fierce intimidations, with terrorist groups aiming at their schools. The attacks have resulted in fatalities among learners and educators in recent months (CNDH, 2020). It was reported by the Ministry of Education in Burkina Faso that from January to April of 2021, 222 teachers and educators fell victim to terrorist assaults; and statistics revealed that 60.5% of the 1,312,071 internally displaced individuals because of terrorism were children (UNICEF, 2020). It was in this light that the United Nations executive for West African countries and the Sahel region characterized the intensifying terrorism-related violence as an unexpected catastrophe with shocking costs distressing people in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso since 2016 (Zenn & Clarke, 2020). Parkinson et al. (2020) asserted that nonmilitary inhabitants have paid the price for most casualties.

School-age children have suffered significant psychological damage when no psychological services were available to assist them, and they have not been found to be enough resilient in the face of terrorism. Schoolboys and girls were not found to possess different levels of resilience (Bene, 2022). In a nutshell, it can be concluded that terrorism spared no one. Government soldiers were fought, civilians were assaulted and murdered, learners and teachers were chased, and their activities disrupted. Livestock were looted and taken away.

Regarding women, the existing knowledge base reveals that, in some instances, as the accomplices of male terrorist groups, they have terrorized other civilians, namely in Nigeria. Research suggested that women's participation was accounted for by the fact that there was increased pressure on male terrorists, resulting in the additional enrollment of female combatants (Lord-Mallam, 2019). Female combatants, however, have only been perceived as victims, not as aggressors, regardless of their reasons, roles, contributions, and durations of their involvement with terrorist groups. (Amusan, Adeyeye, & Oyewole, 2019).

Capability Approach Framework

The capability approach was described as an extensive normative framework utilized to evaluate individuals' well-being, scrutinize social structures, plan policies, and promote societal renovations. Its significant structures comprise its interdisciplinary nature and its prominence on the various or complex magnitudes of wellbeing (Robeyns, 2005). Nussbaum (1993) significantly contributed to the growth and extension of the capability approach, adding an exceptional standpoint. She articulated her form of the capability approach, drawing inspiration from Aristotelian and Marxian notions of human flourishing and the good life. According to Nussbaum, the importance of living well as an individual lies in engaging in life activities made up of human choices and rationalities. Unlike Sen (1993), Nussbaum's framework offers a comprehensive list of human capabilities that are believed to be reachable to every individual worldwide. Nussbaum (2011) steadily utilized the term 'capabilities' in the plural form, accentuating that the crucial aspects or capabilities impacting people's quality of life are varied and quantitatively different. She discussed that essential elements such as health, bodily integrity, and education cannot be condensed within a particular word. Consequently, Nussbaum (2011) chose to label her framework as the 'human development approach.' This nuanced standpoint made her gain some admirations for contributing a more comprehensive, hands-on, and genuine framework for measuring individuals' wellbeing. Nussbaum's perception of wellbeing is said to be deeply rooted in Aristotle's philosophy, predominantly the idea of the 'good life' for every human being. Scholars such as Gasper (1997) and Deneulin (2013) highlighted the position between Nussbaum and Aristotle, accentuating their joint emphasis on generating a situation where people can live enjoyable lives based on their capabilities. Importantly, Nussbaum's account of the capability

approach spreads its emphasis beyond the home, identifying everyone within the household as the piece of investigation for understanding dearth.

The selection of the capability approach framework for the present study provided a basis for comparing mother participants' standard of life to the elements comprising quality of life as suggested by Nussbaum. Another rationale for choosing this conceptual framework was the extension of the elements that were listed as guaranteeing a life of quality. The collection encompasses multiple areas perceived as central human capabilities that are life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses, imagination, and thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, play, political, and material control over one's environment. Further areas of wellbeing include education, security, and economies that the study intend to use as thresholds of capabilities for comparison, evaluation, and life accomplishments in the contexts of the effects of terrorism on mothers' wellbeing.

The Present Study

Past and current investigations have not given much attention to mothers' accounts of the effects of terrorism on their children's education, and well-being, and mothers' concerns about themselves, more specifically as francophone West African females. The present study aimed to get insight into mothers' descriptions of the effects of terrorism. The first objective was to describe the effects of terrorism on children's education and well-being. The second objective was to describe the effects of terrorism on mothers' well-being and economic fabric. The third objective was to get insight into terrorism-related mothers' strategies, strengths, and resilience. The study used semi-structured interviews that continued for approximately 10 to 15 minutes each and attempted to answer the following questions:

What are the effects of terrorism on children's education and well-being?

What are the effects of terrorism on mothers' well-being, occupations, and finances?

How do mothers explain their terrorism-related mothers' strategies, strengths, and resilience?

Methods

Author Positionality

Prior to presenting the outcomes of this current study, the principal investigator acknowledges his stance as a middle-aged man originally from the West African Sahel region, who once worked in the Sahel region as a peacekeeper and counterterrorist agent. In that position, he observed victimized mothers and their children run for safety, food, and education. He perceived himself as an advocate of mothers' well-being, and by extension, their children's. The principal investigator furthermore acknowledges that this standpoint somehow influenced the present study. Additional intersectional identities encompassed the interviewers who identified themselves as graduate females, born and raised in the country's rural areas or abroad yet to farmer parents. Working for NGOs as humanitarians for internally displaced people as refugees, the interviewers posited that they better understand woman participants' standpoints, conditions, feelings, and wants.

Participants

Participants were 26 mothers who eye-witnessed the attack on their villages or rural residential areas by terrorist groups. Participants' levels of education ranged from no formal education at all to some formal elementary education. At the time of the data collection, the participants were living in two distinct and distant refugee camps located in two separate regions. The refugees' camps were about 200 miles apart. The camps were specifically created for internally displaced people in the context of terrorism. The participants were housewives, farmers, retailers of groceries or were combining all or some of the listed activities and were living in rural areas with their spouses and children prior to the attacks. The ages of

mothers ranged from 18 to 55 with an average of 30 (SD = 9.7). Overall, the number of participants' children was 88 with an average of 3.4 (SD = 1.08) per woman. See Table 1 for additional details.

Materials

The interviewers were provided with a questionnaire that contained three open-ended questions that were designed by the researchers. The questions were reviewed by independent researchers to determine the fundamental themes relating to the effects of terrorism on children's education, children's and mothers' wellbeing, and mothers' economic fabrics, coping strategies, strengths, and resilience from mothers' own perspectives. The questions encompassed the following: (a) What are the effects of terrorism on children's education and well-being? (b) What are the effects of terrorism on mothers' well-being, occupations, and finances? (c) How do mothers explain their terrorism-related mothers' strategies, strengths, and resilience? The above questions were preceded by demographic ones that required participants to provide their ages, type of marital status (monogamous, polygamous, single, or widow), number of children (number of boys and girls), and the participants' works and revenues before and after the attacks. Thematic analysis was then utilized to analyze the collected data because it was argued that thematic analysis was a good methodology for self-report interviews and for text that originated from open-ended questions (Hayes, 2000).

Procedures

Upon reception of authorization from the Joseph Ki-Zerbo University's institutional review board and from the social workers who were responsible for the camps, psychology graduate students working in the camps proceeded to collect data from volunteering women who were victims of terrorist attacks. The female participants gave their consent prior to the interviews. In each of the camps, there are offices for social and psychological service providers that refugee women are free to attend whenever they feel the need to. Women who arrived at the offices were explained the research project, the objectives, and how they could contribute voluntarily. Women who agreed to participate were immediately led to a prepared office where two female graduate students in psychology conducted the interviews, after explaining to the participants that the collected data would be anonymous and would not be shared with anyone else, except the research team. A semi-structured protocol was used that was developed by the researchers. The interviewer's audio-recorded each interview. They later transcribed the data verbatim, checked for spelling errors, and then forwarded it to the principal investigator for analysis. Data collection started in December 2022 and continued till April 2023.

Data Analysis

The researchers employed a thematic analysis with multiple stages to code and interpret the interviews, aligning with Braun and Clark's (2006) recommendations. The process comprised the following steps: (1) transcription, familiarization with the data, and selection of quotations, (2) selection of keywords, (3) coding, (4) theme development, (5) conceptualization through interpretation of keywords, codes, and themes, and (6) development of a conceptual model or production of the final report. Psychology students from Joseph Ki-Zerbo University engaged in work within internally displaced people's camps, conducted and transcribed the interviews meticulously, ensuring accuracy. Two faculty members, one volunteering, individually double-checked the collected data and transcriptions for any misinterpretations. Their objective was to become acquainted with the data and identify initial codes. Subsequently, the faculty members isolated segments of the transcripts related to the study's themes, namely "the effect of terrorism on children's education and psychological well-being", "the effects of terrorism on mothers' well-being, occupations and finances", and "how mothers found strengths to fight back against the effects of terrorism." Employing inductive reasoning, the researchers derived codes, organizing, and grouping them based on similarities. Similar codes were combined to form themes. The two researchers collaboratively reviewed the initial themes (Patton, 1990) to ensure internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity, evaluating the extent to which the topics were associated with the entire dataset. After thorough consideration, the researchers mutually agreed on the themes, assigning names and definitions to each. To represent the themes extensively and deeply, verbatim quotes from female participants were used. The goal was to continue to conduct interviews until saturation or informational redundancy was reached. To meet

the assumption of triangulation, investigator triangulation was chosen whereby the researchers utilized a technique suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) to estimate agreement between researcher coders and they detected 90% agreement on the level of convergence encompassing the meaning of proposed themes, their importance, and the selected supporting examples.

Results

Mother participants' reports were coded into five comprehensive themes that are: The effect of terrorism (a) on children's education, (b) on children's wellbeing, (c) on mothers' occupations and economies, (d) on mothers' wellbeing, (e) and mothers' related techniques, strengths, and resilience to counterattack the effects of the violence.

Theme 1: The effects of terrorism on children's education

Theme 1.1: Interruption of schooling

Mothers highlighted how the ongoing crisis was caused by terrorism and how it severely disrupted the education of their children. They argued that schools lost their values. There was among women a consistent pattern of schoolchildren not being able to attend schools due to insecurity. Even when non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provided aid, schools were still burned by terrorists, preventing children from receiving a formal education. Furthermore, women emphasized the significant impact of terrorism on the physical infrastructure of schools, rendering them unusable and unsafe for child learners. The loss of a valuable educational environment added to the challenges both mothers and their children face. "Fatima" (32 years old, mother of three) shared her experiences and thoughts:

"The school lost its value…for lack of security the terrorists came and burned the school, I can no longer contribute to the education of my children because I can no longer control myself. Also, children have become fearful. They are no longer quiet in their heads."

Many mothers' accounts suggested that children abruptly and unwillingly interrupted their education. "Nina" (20 years and mother of two who had some education), "Fanta" (25 years, mother of four), and "Helene" (22 years, mother of two) asserted that their "*children no longer go to school"* because of the crisis. Most participants shared similar thoughts about the extent and severity of schooling being abruptly interrupted.

Theme 1.2: Increased dependency

Mothers insisted on their preeminent dependence on NGOs to help with their children's education in the context of terrorism, exposing their inabilities, and the ones of their spouses and the government to contribute to their children's edification, intellectually, financially, and emotionally. "Fatima" mentioned the contributions of NGOs. She reported: "*My children used to go to school thanks to some NGOs that came to help us on the site.*" Another woman, "Noura" (38 years old and mother of three) shared similar stories. She said: "*If NGOs don't give us food, I am compelled to go to the market and help traders sell their items."*

Mother's reports suggested that NGOs provided a second chance for their children's education. And beyond the academic assistance, NGOs also provided children and their parents with food. "Adele" (31 years old and a mother of three) was very thankful. She commented, "*The school of today is no longer as it used to be because of the security crisis. Thanks to the different NGOs some of our children continue to attend schools."*

Theme 2: The effects of terrorism on children's wellbeing

Theme 2.1: Behavioral variations

Participant mothers pointed out the observable behavioral changes in their children. Some specifically highlighted the heightened fear among boys. This behavioral shift indicated a profound impact on the

overall wellbeing of children, influencing their daily lives and interactions. "Carine" (a 55-year-old woman, mother of 8) described the changes of attitude amongst kids.

"Our children can no longer reach school because of the insecurity. Today we don't even speak about school in this area. Since the start of the crisis children have completely changed their behaviors. Boys especially are scared. I, myself, live a situation where I can no longer control myself."

Children's behavioral changes negatively impacted their social life. Mothers argued that their children became very reserved. "Aicha" (35 years old woman and mother of four children) asserted that she "*can no longer educate*" her "*children since the crisis; children have changed a lot. They are afraid of people, especially foreigners.*" Behavioral changes were also perceptible in children's school-related deeds. School children were compelled to drop out school. "Nina" asserted that "*even children no longer go to school. Because of the crisis*", her "*first son is even traumatized due to gunshots.*" For "Adele" the changes were physical, behavioral, and psychological. She reported that "*Since the start of the crisis … children have changed physically, behaviorally, and mentally… As far as I am concerned, I have changed, I can no longer live my life as I used to.*"

Theme 2.2: Psychological impacts

The victimized children were not only missing out their formal education but were also experiencing fear and trauma. Their mothers' experienced accounts of "*gunshots*", "*fear*" of boys, and changed "*behaviors*" among children echoed the psychological influence of terrorism on their children's wellbeing. This fear not only affected children's ability to study but also contributed to an overall sense of restlessness and uncertainty. It is in this light that, "Fatima" asserted that her children "*have become fearful too. They are no longer quiet in their heads."*

Mothers provided specific instances in which their children showed symptoms of traumatic events. "Nina" shared a specific incident of trauma caused by gunshots, accentuating the direct and instantaneous impact of violence on children. This trauma not only disrupted their education but also left lasting psychological scars, affecting their overall well-being. She said her "*first son is even traumatized because of gunshots."* Participants also mentioned their children's fear, highlighting the persistent sense of insecurity and fear among children, impacting their emotional stability. The description of children being afraid even in response to loud sounds illustrates the deep-seated psychological effects of terrorism on their well-being. "Fanta" reported that "*Children are no longer the same as they used to be. They have become fearful. They are not quiet in their heads. If I speak to them aloud, they are afraid."*

Theme 3: The effects of terrorism on mothers' occupations and finances

Theme 3.1: Monetary struggles and joblessness

Mothers' descriptions underlined the impact of terrorism on their economic fabric, leading to unemployment and financial struggles. Their total incapability to participate in productive occupations worsened the challenges that they faced in providing food for their loved ones. "Sofia" (a mother of five) is not different. Like most participants, she said" *Regarding my occupations, I do nothing now. Since the crisis started, I cannot even make as little as 10000 cfa to buy food. I cannot afford food."* Sofia is not alone as most participants have become idle mothers. Idleness could exacerbate their suffering. Participants' accounts of financial difficulties furthermore stressed the inclusive challenges that they encountered. The financial restraints added to their general suffering, which intensified the mental casualties of the violence "Viviane" (a 29-year-old mother of three boys) explained her financial struggles. She said that she "*cannot have food to eat.*" She "*cannot meet*" her needs as she used to." She "*suffers in all areas.*" Most mothers suffered the same way and had to rely on NGOs or the government.

By uncovering the annual amount of money that they stopped making suddenly as they ran away from their villages and small businesses, mothers underlined the theme of pauperization, preceded by the theme of unemployment. Nine mothers reported their yearly funds in their past lives that seemed enviable to their

present conditions. "Fatima" and "Celine" could save up to "*100 000 cfa*" a year whereas "Sofia" and "Aicha" could save respectively up to "*40000 cfa*" and "*50000 cfa*" per annum.

Theme 3.2: Dislocation and losses

Beyond pauperization, mothers narrated their displacements from their villages as a consequence of terrorism, resulting in several losses and economic disadvantages. The disturbance caused by attacks forced mothers to abandon their homes and traditional activities. "Mamounata" (a 27-year-old lady and mother of three) explained that losses included valuable people who could provide her with social, psychological, emotional, and financial support:

"I am not staying with my husband. I don't know, I don't even know his whereabouts. I am living in this camp alone with my kids. We are having difficulties to get food. I was scared to move to another village because I thought that on my way, I could come across terrorists, but I didn't have any choice."

Theme 4: The Effects of terrorism on mothers' wellbeing

Theme 4.1: Individual trauma

Mothers reported on their well-being as the result of terrorism. Some mothers shared traumatic personal experiences, revealing the direct impact of terrorism on their psychological health. The witnessing of a loved one's or an acquaintance's violent death contributed to deep emotional distress, highlighting the effects of terrorism on mothers' mental well-being. "Helene" commented that she is "*a widow*", "*they killed*" her "*husband during the crisis in his village…*". She added that she is "*traumatized* "as she "*saw men kill*" her "*husband in front of*" her. "*It makes*" her "*suffer now.*" Mothers provided supplementary accounts of witnessing dangerous attacks. This emphasized mothers' direct contact with traumatizing situations. Their constant expressive distress summarized the long-lasting effect of the violence on their psychological well-being. "Georgette" (32 years and mother of three) said that "*Terrorists have slaughtered many people in front of me; they have raped women in front of me. Till now, I am feeling bad.*"

Theme 4.2: Sleep instabilities

Parents mentioned sleep instabilities as the result of terrorist activities, thereby casting light on the persistent mental impacts as the memories of traumatic events haunted mothers even during the vulnerable moments of sleep. Mothers' descriptions emphasized the ongoing nature of their distress. "Celine" (mother of three) commented that "*terrorists murdered people in front of*" her, that she "*cannot sleep at night, especially when*" she is "*by herself*", and she "*see the same things over and over.*"

Theme 4.3: Emerging emotions: fear, anger, and anxiety

Many mothers mentioned concepts such as "*fear*" and "*trauma*" underlining the complex emotional challenges that they faced. The coexistence of fear and trauma could suggest a lasting psychological burden, influencing their daily lives and interactions. "Celine" said that she "*has problems, such as fear and trauma.*" Furthermore, many other mothers expressed anger towards the terrorists responsible for their diverse losses. The theme of emotion reflected a strong emotional response to the losses, with anger directed to those perceived as responsible. For some mothers, anger is the result of lost materials, inaccessibility to homes, or killings of loved ones. For others, anger stemmed from a combination of all of them. "Patricia" (50 years, widow, and mother of four) shared personal experiences.

"I am mad at the terrorists who killed my 27-year-old son. I am taking care of his wife and his two children. I am facing difficulties taking care of them because I don't have anything, I don't do anything either. I left everything behind as I ran away from terrorists. The terrorists wouldn't let us take away any belongings. They prevented us from taking anything away from the village. They checked us on the road. They confiscated the little money we possessed. With tears in my eyes, we reached another village."

All parents reported that they were "*angry*", and "*mad*" and their comments revealed that they were also anxious. Their anger and anxiety showed their helplessness vis-a-vis the phenomenon. "Assanata" (30 years, mother of four) explained that "*Since the attack in*" her "*village*", she "*cannot recover*" her "*strengths*", she is "*sad*". She "*cannot even chat with people*". She "*fears male foreigners*". Furthermore, she "*moved from*" her "*village to another one with the help of soldiers.*"

Many mothers reported that they still fear, even after the attacks. "Alima" (23 years, mother of two boys) said that she was haunted by what she saw. She commented that she is "*still scared because*" she "*cannot forget what*" she "*saw with*" her "*eyes in the village*". She "*saw people being slaughtered*". Like fear, anger stemmed from mothers' helplessness. "Adjara" (35 years old and a mother of six) explained how her socioeconomic context accounted for her anger.

"I am still angry because I lost everything during the attacks in my village. Currently, I possess nothing. My children have neither clothes nor food. I left my village bare feet and reached another village. It was only when I reached the town that I could get some shoes to wear."

Though not the only reason, many participants' anger was caused by their inability to plan their flees and take some materials along. "Nemata" (18 years and mother of one child) argued that she is "*still mad because*" she "*left the village empty hands.*" She "*couldn't take anything as*" she "*left the village.*"

Theme 4.4: Loss of all bearings and suicidal feelings

Mothers argued that they lost all bearing in life as a result of terrorism. Clearly, their reports showed that they received insufficient support for themselves and their family members. They were tired and were stepping into a new pattern of life that looked foreign to them. Many mothers reported a lack of familiarity between them, and the new lifestyle imposed on them. They uttered their discontentment. "Roukiatou" (21 years and mother of two boys) said:

"I cannot tell which world I am living in now. Today, it is very difficult to find my way in life. I managed to run away from my village for another village thanks to the soldiers. I was crying. I am still not fine."

In the same light, "Adele" shared her thoughts: "*I think my life doesn't make any sense.*" "Viviane" talked about her existence. She said that "*Life has become very complicated for*" her. As for "Mounira" (35 years old and mother of four kids) she said that "*Till now*" she "*has a miserable life.*"

The loss of all bearings led some mothers to admit suicidal thoughts that cast light on the depth of emotional distress that they experienced. Their thorough narration magnified the harshness of the mental effect. There was a need for psychological support for themselves and their loved ones. "Viviane" asserted that "*life has become very complicated for her*" as "*sometimes*", she "*has suicidal thoughts.*" Openly verbalizing despair, some mothers expressed their struggles, revealing the weight of their experiences with terrorism. Mothers revealed profound expressive anguish and a sense of hopelessness. Hopelessness was mentioned by most mothers. "Sali" (18 years old and mother of one child) shared her experience.

"To this day, I am still angry because I don't have access to my village. I lost everything in the terrorist attack. I even lost a child and moved from village to village to reach this refugees' camp in which I am living today."

Theme 5: Mothers' strategies, strengths, and resilience

Theme 5.1: Joining hands with others

Mother respondents exposed their survivability within the ongoing crisis. Despite the adversities, they proved their resilience in their abilities to survive. Mothers kept going on with their lives despite the attacks. Better, some females showed the willpower to provide for their loved ones despite monetary limitations and insecurity. Some mothers emphasized their reliance on the military for assistance, highlighting the role of external forces in providing safety and enabling escape. The military became a central feature in women's

strategies to pilot the challenging circumstances caused by terrorism. "Poko" (32 years, mother of three), "Sali", "Justine" (18 years, mother of three), and "Assanata" (30 years, mother of four boys) emphasized military support to flee from their endangered villages. Sali said: "*I could keep walking to another village thanks to the government soldiers.*" In the same vein, Poko said:

"I am a mother of three children, one girl, and two boys…To this day, I am still afraid, especially when I hear noises such as gunshots. The soldiers helped us leave our village for another one. Upon arrival, I could continue to reach another village thanks to the militaries."

Casualties would have been worse if it wasn't for the loyal soldiers and other people. The arrival of the military minimized the losses, spared many lives, and facilitated the displacement of victims to safer zones. "Marietou" (40 years and mother of six children) reported that she "*… managed to reach another village with the support of the military*", and that she "*would have died in*" her "*village if it wasn't for the soldiers since terrorists almost destroyed everything.*" For some mothers, the military was essential, for others, the help came from civilian neighbors or family members. "Aminata" (19 years old and mother of a boy) explained how she was rescued.

"I was so panic that I fainted. I didn't know how I managed to leave the village to reach another village. Later, I was informed that my stepbrothers saved my life. If it wasn't for them, I would have been dead like my husband."

Theme 5.2: Running and dislodging for safety

Mothers mentioned their adaptation to changed circumstances. Their accounts illustrated how individuals were adapting to the changed circumstances brought about by the crisis. Most mothers uttered altered lifestyles and behaviors, indicating a shift in their ways of living as they attempted to cope with the challenges through relocation to safer areas. Running "*barefoot*" without "*anything*" but "*tears in the eyes*" sometimes abandoning children and husbands behind but moving forward for safety and the future. Women's descriptions of their displacements underline the extreme measures mothers were compelled to take to ensure their survivability and that of their children. The loss of belongings, including a child and or a husband added a poignant layer to the challenges they faced. All participants had to run away from their homes, either with all family members or separately. They felt safer in larger "*villages*" or towns whereby they were gathered in "*camps*" if they did not have close family members to accommodate them upon arrival in the new town. "Abiba" (a 25-year-old woman and mother of two) shared her experience.

"I am very angry. It was a Thursday evening; we were at the market. Suddenly, we heard gunshots. From the market, I ran away and could reach another village with my eyes full of tears because I didn't have all my children with me. It was only a few months later that I was reunited with my daughter of seven years old. She ran away alongside our neighbors to another village."

Theme 5.3: Mental resilience

The parents expressed concern for the well-being and education of their children. Despite their challenges, there was a clear desire to contribute to their children's education and future, emphasizing the importance they placed on education for the next generation. Resilience was evidenced. The individuals seemed to persevere and try to make sense of their lives amid the terrorism-related adversity. Some mothers argued that idleness was not a survival option. They were active in their new lives for the sake of themselves and their children. "Noura" (38 years old, a mother of five children) described her new situation and her resilience.

"… I currently live a life of sh…t. I have no house to sleep. Regarding food, if NGOs don't give us food, I am compelled to go to the market and help traders sell their items so that I can get some money and buy food for my children. I successfully fled from my village thanks to the soldiers. I was crying as I left my village with my children because we lost everything in the attacks."

Oftentimes, mothers' tears were associated with the courage to move forward. In their poignant description of their accounts, words such as "*difficulty*", "*crying*", and "*miserable existence*" were used together or interchangeably. At the same time, mothers revealed their strength to move forward "Mounira" said:

"It is very difficult to obtain food to eat, me and my children. I don't even know my husband's whereabouts. Since the attack that took place in my village, everyone ran their way. I live alone with my children. I do my best to feed them. On that day, I cried as I ran away from the village. I was asking myself many questions about how to restart my life again. Till now, I have a miserable life."

Mothers' accounts suggested that in their new lives, they had to play double roles, first as mothers, and second as fathers, in replacement of the absent fathers whose localizations were covered with uncertainties. Mothers' description suggested that in some cases they had to continue to exist with the unbearable thoughts that something undesirable could have occurred to a separated child. To live with uncertainty could suggest a very heavy burden. "Abiba" commented that she fled away from the marketplace and she "*didn't have all*" her "*children with*" her. "*It was only after a few months later that*" she "*was reunited with*" her "*daughter of seven years old*." "Mamounata", another mother had all her children with her, but her husband was missing. She said that she was not staying with" her "*husband*", she didn't know "*his whereabouts*". She was "*living in this camp alone with*" her "*kids*". Despite the difficulties, mothers still had hope, revealing their mental strengths and resilience. "Mounira" was thinking about the ways and means to resume her life. She said that she "*was asking*" herself "*many questions about how to restart*" her "*life again*", suggesting that she was still struggling to remain mentally fit for the future. Females' conditions such as being a woman with dependents or being a single woman without dependents might have necessarily led to different outcomes when resisting the adverse effects of terrorism more specifically violence to a larger extent.

Discussion

The present study aimed to get insight into victimized mothers' descriptions of the effects of terrorism on children and their mothers' well-being, mothers' economic fabrics, and how mothers coped with the adverse effects of terrorism. To conduct a study whose aim was to investigate the well-being of women who were victims of terrorism and its related violence, the researchers were naturally guided by the Capability Approach framework that was developed by Sen (1993) and further expanded by Nussbaum. Capability Approach framework highlights individuals' capabilities, including mothers to lead a life they have valued. The framework emphasizes the prominence of empowering people, in this context, mothers to accomplish treasured functioning and capabilities rather than exclusively concentrating on capital or services.

Mother participants in the present study described the effects of terrorism as antagonistic to children's learning, education, and well-being. Past research that investigated the impact of terrorism also yielded similar harmful results, symptoms of psychological disorders, and destruction of local economic fabrics. In a quantitative study that investigated the effect of violence on students' resilience and school achievement (Bene, 2022), findings indicated that a significant proportion of student participants exhibited a limited level of resilience, as assessed by both the RS-14 and the five resilience items related to terrorism. Participants categorizing their resilience levels as very low, low, and low-end comprised 116 individuals, constituting 64.44% of the total sample. Similarly, those categorizing their terrorism-related resilience as very low, low, and low-end were 139 students, making up 77.22% of all participants. The students' apprehensions about terrorism threats may reflect concerns extending beyond the educational context. Amnesty International (2021) reported that more than 9514 people underwent internal displacement within Burkina Faso. Among these people, children namely were denied their rights to formal education. Moreover, it was discussed that multiple and recurrent forceful threats targeted specifically child and adolescent learners and educators. Terrorists explicitly beset schools. The attacks recently resulted in the disastrous loss of many lives of which were educators and schoolchildren (CNDH, 2020). Burkina Faso's Ministry of Education emphasized that from January to April 2021, 222 professionals in the teaching industry were victimized by terrorist groups. Additional statistics by UNICEF (2020) showed that 60.5% of the 1,312,071 internally displaced people

due to terrorist attacks were children. In the light of the Capacity Approach framework, it is arguable that victimized mothers and their progenies were facing difficulties that hindered their well-being as it relates to education, health, and life.

Outside educational contexts yet, mothers' descriptions also revealed antagonistic consequences on their own well-being, occupations, and their financial health. It was in that light that Jordan (2005) asserted that after acts of terrorism, a substantial percentage of people experienced high levels of stress and displayed behavioral variations. Many individuals fell in thoughtful examinations of essential characteristics of human life, death, life, and introspection. It was furthermore discussed that individuals who were impacted by terrorism undergo mental changes as they attempt to create their uniqueness and take part in their society anew. Reintegrating their society requires them to grieve and recover.

Terrorist groups were found to disrupt people's daily lives (Zeidner, 2006). It was abundantly discussed that victims of terror developed extreme psychological symptoms that encompass anger, denial, loss of concentration, sleep instabilities, and depression. Additionally, victims were found to display grief, apprehension, anxiety, and behavioral issues related to drug use such as smoking and alcohol ingestion (Nandi et al., 2005). It was concluded that attack events were likely to impart a persistent sense of lack of confidence in the victims, especially when their confidence and security are in a compromission (Waters, 2002). Studies showed that terrorist attacks caused more occurrences of psychopathological disorders than other catastrophes (Salguero et al., 2011). The findings of a qualitative study that enrolled survivors of the 2008 bombings by terrorist groups in Guwahati suggested participants' reports of highlighted stress-related symptoms such as avoidance coping strategies, arousal in excess, and the victims' confusion. The results furthermore revealed that psychological symptoms such as fear, anxiety, sadness, reduced interest in daily occupations, and despair were detected. Emotions such as fear, worry, loss, sadness, and mourning were commonly experienced following terrorist attacks (Hussain & Sarma, 2016; Bragin, 2011). A substantial number of past research suggested that what mothers underwent in the present research emphasized the decline in their mental well-being. Capacity Approach well-being is holistic and encompasses woman participants' psychological fitness. The analysis rooted in this framework furthermore suggests that happiness or a good life can be the result of a very long process.

Economically wise, Arunatilake et al. (2001) shed light on the direct and indirect charges of battles in a given country. Taking the recent Lamu attacks as an example, they argued that the local conflict resulted in the shutting of guesthouses, the departure of tourists, the loss of employment opportunities, the deaths of many people, and increased insecurity, leading to restriction of movement after certain hours of the night. Gatimu (2014) put it that fights usually cause disadvantageous impacts on the economic fabric, bringing about damages to affected regions and incurring costs related to the reconstruction of the victimized regions.

The intensification of terrorist activities and insurrection have destroyed societies and agriculturalists have escaped to safe sites. Studies offered results that showed that terrorism has adverse and important consequences on farming productivity (Okafor & Chikalipah, 2021). Another study exposed that terrorism-related insecurity was harmful to the overall well-being of the public and its actions bring about low quality of life, residents' dislocation, loss of lives, the ruin of business, assets and materials, transfer, and interruption of businesses (Chibuike & Eme, 2019).

The specificity in the present research is that the victimized women's financial support to their homes was significant. Culturally, women contributed to their family well-being by purchasing any condiments that are eaten alongside the staple foods, thereby investing a substantial amount of their incomes in their households. Mothers' money is not to be used freely for self-gratification whereas men are known to spend their money outside the family context, oftentimes for solitary delights. The burden of terrorism, in this light, could be felt more deeply by the deprived mothers. Scholar Robeyns (2003) argued that Sen's (1999a) approach, as the pioneer of the framework, emphasized tangible independence, that is what individuals can do and instead of what individuals should be undertaking to ease their disadvantaged life conditions. Capability approach posited that the objectives of wellbeing, justice, and growth ought to be outlined around individuals' capabilities to work efficiently, referring to individuals' authentic occasions to follow

chosen actions and activities and to personify their favorite individualities. These actions and activities were labeled as functionings by Sen (1993). Functionings were said to incorporate numerous aspects such as employment, leisure, literacy, health, community involvement, and social recognition. Mothers who are victims of terrorism seem to be deprived of all of the above.

Regarding mothers' strategies, strength, and resilience, the present findings suggested themes of courage, persistence, and desire to survive and surpass the difficulties as mothers cling to their lives. Several past studies related violence or terrorism to positive gains.

In this vein, it was argued that most individuals who were exposed to traumatic events generally assert that they received advantages through the mediating effects of coping strategies that are related to the adverse experiences but not directly from the traumatic events. Several studies labeled his phenomenon advantageous outcome, encouraging life variations, stress-related development, or "posttraumatic growth" (Helgeson, Reynolds, & Tomich, 2006; Linley & Joseph, 2004). Whether this encouraging knowledge was referred to as a process, a result, or both (Zoellner & Maercker, 2006), some elements that are associated with them are likely to become apparent even in the early instants that follow the effect of a traumatic incident (Fredrickson et al, 2003).

The present study emphasized the strength of women and showed that their attitudes were similar to the ones of other victims of terrorism as described in past studies. Past studies yet distinguished the effects of terrorism on the general population from its effects on direct victims. It was discussed that the latter suffered more (Vasquez, 2005). Those studies yet did not differentiate between the different types of terrorism, their methods, degrees of causalities, the coping gaps between men and women victims, and more importantly the mediated effects of social and economic contexts on terrorism-related casualties. The present study, for example, enrolled mothers. The latter, unlike other participants in previous studies, could possess more disabilities that encompassed the lack of formal education for the majority. Except for a few mothers who had some formal education, the rest never attended any schools. Another vulnerability could be the size of families and the level of pauperization. The participants have on average three children with a range from one to eight children per mother. Most participants were living in rural areas, in polygamous families, indicating that several female participants were legally or traditionally married to a male head of the family. In addition, the demographic data suggested that some mothers were widows. It is not clear whether their spouses were all murdered during the terrorist attacks or before. The demographics showed that women were young with an average age of 30, which is very representative of the country's population, suggesting that when terrorism first struck the capital city of the country, the women were either children, adolescents, or young adults, nine years earlier. The demographics suggested that mothers were already coping with the dire life conditions before the attacks and could have developed some coping strategies that they transferred to tackle the effects of the present terrorism. The specificities in the present study were uncertainties that could have enhanced the effects of the attacks and suggested increased difficulties. They included the unknown causes of the ongoing terrorism, the ambiguity of when it would end, the scarcity of modern infrastructures, means of communication in the rural areas, the absence of psychological services, and the disappearances of family members, suggestion low quality of life base on the Capacity approach criteria.

The capability approach evaluates strategies based on their influence on people's capabilities. It enquires whether people benefit from good health and whether the essential means or resources that are needed to sustain the capabilities, such as clean water, healthcare access, disease prevention, and basic health education, are accessible. Likewise, the Capability approach checks whether people are satisfactorily fed and whether the criteria required for this capability, such as access to enough food and privileges, are satisfied. Moreover, it inspects whether individuals have access to an excellent education system, chances for sincere political contribution, community engagements assisting in coping with daily challenges, and the cultivation of trustworthy alliances. Based on the findings from the present research, mothers, despite their willpower to emancipate themselves and care for their loved on, seem to be deprived of all, including basic unmet needs.

Finally, it appears that mothers' resilience had its foundation deeply rooted in their history, in that they were used to pre-terrorism difficult life conditions. It had its foundation in social support as mothers depended on soldiers to run away on NGOs for food, and on collective and mutual support as they lived in refugee camps. The woman participants' social contexts described the gravity of the violence and the extent of their resilience. Not a single region or village was spared, not a single village could guarantee total security, not even erected camps for internally displaced women and their children. The sounds of attacks were spread, causing fear and relocation. All countries in the Sahel were under terrorists' fire, leaving no woman and child safe. Furthermore, scarcities of water and other provisions have long been experienced by the women in their villages before the attacks, contributing to the cycle of dire life conditions including terrorism.

In light of this, it is arguable that this long-lasting terrorism is unique, and its victimized women experienced unique accounts and display exceptional strengths and resilience-related behaviors. To this day, the presence of woman terrorists has not been documented in the francophone countries of the Sahel. They could have been accomplices but have not carried guns alongside their male counterparts. Overall women remain victims rather than perpetrators of evil actions. It was the everlasting difficult life conditions in the Sahel regions that gave mothers more strength and added to their resilience levels. A substantial number of studies reported that women have so far directly contributed to fighting against terrorism escalation. It was argued that mothers and women have, in active manners, discouraged either their spouses or their children from siding, enrolling, or fighting with terrorist groups. Females have also undertaken peaceful demonstrations to fight back against terrorists' activities whereas other civilian females have carried guns and have engaged in physical combats against the terrorists in Nigeria (Atim, 2020).

Nussbaum developed a detailed account of capabilities that was termed 'central human capabilities.' The collection comprehends ten central human capabilities that are (a) life, (b) bodily health, (c) bodily integrity; (d)senses, imagination, and thought, (e) emotions; (f) practical reason; (g) affiliation; (h) other species; (i) play; and (j) political and material control over one's environment. Nussbaum sustained that these capabilities are necessary for every person to live an honest human existence, facilitating the accomplishment of human prosperity and self-esteem. Nussbaum's work legitimates participant women's struggles and resilience for better lives and well-being while showing women's insufficiencies, what they already possess, and what they need to focus on

In the face of violence-related difficulties, it is essential that women who do not have education and whose voices have not been heard receive support on how to make their voices heard and learn how to defend themselves with more adapted coping strategies. In a study conducted in the Western world, Kasper and Aponte (1996) gauged the frequency of violence, the forms of circumstances that make females feel in danger, and more importantly how women defend themselves against possible oppressions and make behavioral variations to avoid violence. It is believed that not all women who were once victims of some sort share their experiences. Those who do it, somehow take a step toward their recovery. Because of secondary victimization, many women victims will not share their experience for fear of being blamed for being assaulted, increasing their level of distress (Gravelin et al, 2024).) All victims need some help. In this light Salim et al (2022) argued that there may be several advantages in supporting victims emotionally and with informational assistance, thereby inviting prospective investigators to pay attention to the concept of emotional assistance. Capability Approach also listed emotions as one central element to women's capability development in a successful life.

 The researchers believe that in the context of women victims of terrorism, the Capability Approach should be used and applied to comprehend how the experiences of traumatic events could limit or expand mothers' capabilities. The framework explores the impact of terrorism on their well-being by weighing their ability to function in various dimensions of life. These dimensions include physical and mental health, education, and social participation. Nussbaum emphasizes the necessity of authorizing the enumerated capabilities to ensure their widespread availability. She introduced the concept of a 'threshold of capabilities,' proclaiming that each citizen, each mother to be more specific, should be assured social minimum security, making these capabilities as fundamental as other essential aspects of human existence. Furthermore, Nussbaum admits the role of various organizations, comprising religious, labor, and government entities, in ensuring the accomplishment of these threshold levels of mothers' capabilities.

Limitation

The present study attempted to add to the existing knowledge base regarding how victimized mothers describe the effects of terrorism on their children's education, children's and mothers' wellbeing, mothers' economic fabrics, strengths, and resilience. A few limitations were yet highlighted. The study being a qualitative investigation, the findings solely represent the views of mother participants and were not meant to be generalized. Mothers' accounts about their psychological issues or mental health should not be considered diagnoses of any psychological disorders. Next, since mothers did not attend school, there was a possibility that they could not express their insights clearly. Participants' emotions or some local cultural factors could have hindered the rendering of their accounts with fidelity, or shame also could have impeded their responses. Finally, the sampling did not undergo randomized sampling. Future research is highly recommended that use both quantitative and or qualitative studies to investigate the causes, effects, consequences, or other terrorism-related concepts that relate to women's and children's overall well-being, especially in the francophone countries of West Africa to provide more acumens for the existing knowledge base and draw international and national decision-makers attentions to the victims' lives. Using quantitative designs, future studies should get involved in the investigations of the effects of women's social and cultural factors and contexts as mediators of their strengths and levels of resilience in the contexts of terrorism.

Conclusion

The findings in the present study emphasized results in past and similar studies whose focuses were the effects of terrorism on local rural populations. Beyond past studies yet, the present study shed light solely on mothers. Mothers and children represent the source of life and the future of mankind, there is an urgent need for psychological services to help them cope with the adverse effects of terrorism and violence. Mothers need to be empowered as the ones who continue to care for their children with or without the presence of men until the threshold suggested by Nussbaum and Sen (1993) for a good life or well-being is reached. Beyond the provision of psychological services, mothers need monetary assistance to keep on expanding their lucrative activities, thereby supporting their children's education. It has been documented that women's earned moneys in rural West Africa are used for the family's wellbeing whereas men are more likely to spend their incomes outside the family context. One of the most recent theoretical and methodological progressions in peace studies confronts the outdated concept of science as disconnected from social engagement. The notion of 'Transformative Peace' calls for the active contribution of the population in studies, education, and creativities aimed at building peace and resolving conflicts. It highlights considering people as active participants instead of passive subjects or simple beneficiaries of externally devised approaches (Ramos Muslera, E.A, 2021).

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The author (s) have no conflict of interest to declare.

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Table 1. Demographics

Fictitious names	Ages	Number of children	Marital status	Level of Education	Annual Savings
Fatima	32	3 (1girl & 2 boys	Polygamous	None	100.000 f
Carine	55	8 (2girls & 6 boys)	Polygamous	None	50000 f
Nina	20	2 (boys)	Monogamous	Grade 3	60.000 f
Fanta	25	4 (3girls &1 boy)	Monogamous	None	65.000 f
Helene	22	2 (boys)	Widow (spouse murdered)	Some schooling	60.000 f
Celine	X	3 (1girl & 2 boy)	Polygamous	X	100.000 f
Adele	31	3 (1girl & 2 boys)	Monogamous	None	75.000 f
Sofia	X	5(2girls & 3 boys)	X	None	40.000f
Aicha	35	4(3girl & 1 boy)	Polygamous	None	50.000 f

Table 1. Demographics (continued)

Fictitious names	Ages	Number of children	Marital status	Level of Education	Annual Savings
Sali	18	1 (boy)	Polygamous	X	X
Mamounata	27	3(2girls & 1 boy)	Polygamous/ Spouse's whereabout is not known	X	X
Alima	23	2 (boys)	Monogamous	X	X
Poko	32	3 (1girl &2 boys)	Monogamous	X	X

Justine	18	3 (1girl & 2 boys)	Polygamous	X	X
Assanata	30	4 (boys)	Widow	X	X
Adjara	35	6 (2 girls & 4 boys)	Polygamous	X	X
Viviane	29	3 (boys)	Widow/ Spouse was murdered in an attack	X	X
Marietou	40	6 (2girls & 4 boys)	Widow	X	X

Table 1. Demographics (continued)

Fictitious names	Ages	Number of children	Marital status	Level of Education	Annual Savings
Nemata	18	1 (boy)	Polygamous/ 3rd wife	X	X
Abiba	25	2 (girls)	Polygamous	X	X
Noura	38	5 (2 girls & 3 boys)	Polygamous	X	X
Patricia	50	4 children left (1 was murdered)	Widow	X	X
Aminata	19	1 (boy)	widow	X	X
Georgette	32	3 children	Monogamous	X	X
Roukiatou	21	2 (boys)	X	X	X
Mounira	35	5 (3girls & 1 boy)	No info about spouse's whereabout	X	X

Note: X= No information was provided

1 USD = 600 f. cfa