Journal of Crime and Criminal Behavior
Vol. 3, No. 1, 2023, pp. 155-178

URL: www.arfjournals.com
https://doi.org/10.47509/JCCB.2023.v03i01.09

Shifting in Landscape of Suicide Terrorism from Middle East to West Africa: A Model for Imitative Suicide Terrorism by Boko Haram

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TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Obinna Paschal Ezeihuoma (2023). Shifting in Landscape of Suicide Terrorism from Mobile East to West Africa: A Model for Imitative Suicide Terrorism by Boko Haram. *Journal of Crime and Criminal Behavior,* 3: 1, pp. 155-178. *https://doi.org/10.47509/JCCB.2023.v03i01.09*

Abstract: Studies have continued to identify the sensational role of the media in the propagation of terror-related suicide attacks. Commonly regarded as a rare occurrence, imitating or copycatting suicide attacks from Middle East has become a tactic in the arsenal of attacks by the Boko Haram terrorist group in Nigeria. Thus, there is a shifting in landscape of suicide terrorism from Middle East to West Africa. Using data drawn from the Chicago Project on Security and Threats (CPOST) and the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), this paper examined and found a positive correlation between incidents of suicide attacks in Iraq and the incidents of suicide terrorist attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram in Nigeria from 2012–2016. One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized to compare the incidents of suicide attacks in Iraq and Syria in the Middle East and in Nigeria around the Lake Chad basin region of West Africa (at the intersection of Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon) in a bid to analyze the differences, copycat effects, and suicide clusters that emerged as a result of these groupings. Concurrently, the results show that there are no significant differences of copycat effects in the execution of the suicide attacks in Iraq, Syria, and Nigeria, but suicide clusters (waves) were not uncovered in Nigeria. The results will help to develop proactive measures on how to curb, understand, and predict the determinants and lethality of future suicide terrorist attacks, the operational and demographic trends of bombers, and the use of women and children/teenage bombers by Boko Haram.

Keywords: Copycat, suicide-terrorism, Boko Haram, terrorism, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Suicide terrorism is rapidly gaining strategic importance among terrorist organizations; annual suicide terrorist attacks have spiked to 1,679 % (Farnham & Liem, 2017, p.

Received : 19 March 2023 • **Revised :** 14 April 2023 • **Accepted :** 23 April 2023 • **Published :** 30 June 2023

3) since the inception of the war on terror in 2001. Suicide terrorism accounted for approximately 19 % of all terror-related attacks between 1970 and 2015 (Global Terrorism Database, 2018). Studies have identified the enormous influence of mass media in the propagation of terror-related suicide attacks (Farnham & Liem, 2017; Sheehan, 2014; Stack, 1997; Surette, 2017). The influential power of the media engenders imitation which evokes a wave of similar behaviors in the mind of readers or viewers of the news items (Farnham & Liem, 2017). Thus, Boko Haram is inspired by the high exposure that suicide attacks by other terrorist organizations garner in the media. Because it shares risk factors with other terror groups, Boko Haram replicate such suicide terrorist attacks and thereby gain a reputation and a sense of admiration among their extremist peers—a crucial factor employed by terrorist groups when recruiting prospective members (Farnham & Liem, 2017).

Commonly regarded as a rare exigency, copycat or imitative suicide blends some of the aspects of the original incident into a new suicide case—or, in the case of terrorism, into a new attack (Farnham & Liem, 2017). Boko Haram terrorist group imitate other terror groups (e.g., Al Qaeda, Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) by adopting suicide terrorism as an expedient way to promote its arsenal of attacks in Nigeria and across the Lake Chad Basin region of West Africa, a convergent zone comprising three other countries: Chad, Cameroon and Niger (Warner & Matfess, 2017). Currently, it remains unclear to what extent the copycat effect can be established between incidents of suicide terrorist attacks as seen around the world, especially in Iraq, and suicide attacks executed by Boko Haram in Nigeria. This is the crux of this paper: seeking out innovative approaches to preventing and dealing with the modern threat of copycat suicide terrorism.

Using an explanatory sequential mixed method design on the data drawn from the Chicago Project on Security and Threats' *Suicide Attack Database* (CPOST-SAD) and the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), this paper examined whether there was a correlation between 45 incidents of suicide terrorism that occurred in Iraq between 2012 and 2016 and were sensationally reported in global media (independent variable: primary generator suicide attacks), and about 45 incidents of suicide terrorist attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram during the same time period (dependent variable: copycat or imitative suicide attacks). Also, one-way analysis of the variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the incidents of suicide attacks in Iraq and Syria in the Middle East with those in Nigeria in the area of the Lake Chad basin (that is, at the intersection of Niger, Chad, and Cameroon). This was to analyze the differences and the copycat effects arising as a result of these groupings, especially within these five years (2012-2016) of intense Boko Haram suicide attack.

There are pertinent questions addressed in this paper to provide a framework for this research to tackle the issues of copycat or imitative suicide terrorism by Boko Haram

in Nigeria. They are: (a). Is there a correlation between reported suicide terrorist attacks in Iraq and incidents of suicide terrorism perpetrated by Boko Haram in Nigeria from 2012–2016? (b). Does sensationalistic reporting of suicide attacks in Iraq and Syria increase the likelihood of similar attacks in Nigeria?

1.1. Back ground of the problem

The problem of suicide terrorism, of course, is not new; however, it has increased rapidly (Sheehan, 2014) in last two decades, and there is a growing shift in the use of suicide terrorism from the Middle East to Africa, and especially to Nigeria (BBC, 2018). Looking at the trend, we see that suicide terrorist attacks worldwide rose from an average of 5 per year in the 1980s to 10 per year in 1990s (Sheehan, 2014) and surged dramatically after 9/11, reaching a record high of 521 cases in 2007, with many of those incidents occurring within the context of the war in Iraq. The following year saw a decline in frequency of these attacks (Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism [CPOST], 2014), which held until 2012, when an upswing of suicide terrorism began. Some 384 cases were reported in 2013, an increase of about 46% from 2012. As of mid-2015, about three-quarters of all suicide attacks took place in just five countries: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Nigeria, and Iraq (CPOST, 2015; IEP, 2018; Warner & Matfess, 2017). Attacks in these five countries accounted for 72% of all terror-related deaths in 2015. These same five countries have been ranked the worst on the *Global Terrorism Index* every year since 2013 (IEP, 2018).

Also, in 2015, just four terrorist groups (ISIS, Boko Haram, the Taliban, and Al Qaeda) accounted for 74% of terror-related fatalities (IEP, 2016, p. 3). Boko Haram's suicide attacks contributed to this upsurge in the numbers of attacks worldwide (CPOST, 2015). Hence, 2012–2016 mark the most brutal period of Boko Haram's terror campaign, with 434 instances of suicide terrorist attacks (successful or attempted bombings) claiming 1,934 lives—or 2,283, if we include the bombers themselves (Warner & Matfess, 2017).

These trends are concerning, given that suicide terrorism is the deadliest form of terrorism, about 13 times more lethal than any other form of attack (Pape, 2005). Globally, suicide terrorist attacks have caused more than 37,000 deaths and 102,000 injuries since 1991 (CPOST, 2014). Despite the lethality of suicide terrorism worldwide and in Nigeria in particular, there is dearth of literature examining a possible correlation between suicide terrorist activity in Iraq and Syria in the Middle East and similar attacks carried out by Boko Haram in Nigeria or around the Lake Chad basin.

Various studies have identified the symbiosis of media and terrorism. They have demonstrated the power of the media to directly or indirectly influence intended attackers to execute an act of terror. It is believed to occur among readers or viewers

of news items from media (Bilgen, 2012; Farnham & Liem, 2017; Philips, 1974; Surette, 2002, 2017). Irrespective of the years of studies on the relationship between media reporting and terrorism, the scholarship to examine a copycat effect on suicide terrorism has been scanty, especially in sub-Saharan African countries (e.g., Nigeria). This is mainly because of researchers' concentration on terrorist crimes that have been publicized on television and in newspapers. But in the modern world, what comprises "media" has changed; terrorism-related content has become prevalent in many ways through various nontraditional news outlets (Manning, 1998; Surette, 2014).

Thus, in the twenty-first century, the definition of media has changed and been taken to a whole new level. It now encompasses new areas while retaining some of the older ones. "Media" now encompasses print media, radio and television broadcasting, electronic news media, entertainment, infotainment, the Internet, and social media and networking (Surette, 2014; 2017). In addition, copycat or imitative crimes like suicide terrorism are today connected to literature, television programs, music, video games, and print publications, news programming. Despite the large volume of studies on media reporting of violence and its link to social aggression, a thorough study of copycat crimes has lagged (Surette, 2017). At this juncture, copycat effects are perceived as a relatively rare occurrence, and are mainly regarded as an issue for at-risk persons who already have a strong predilection to crime, or in preexisting criminal populations. Thus, the effect of the media is regarded to be more qualitative (that is, influencing the nature of criminal conduct) than quantitative which affects the number of instances of criminality (Surette, 2017).

Boko Haram, in particular, imitate or copy other terror groups in their copious use of media. Boko Haram has been utilizing various media outlets since 2009, and has become highly effective in using them to get across its message. Aside from its traditional approach of making films aimed at recruiting new fighters, the group now disseminates or propagates its message through social media and networking, allowing it to reach greater number of people (Nance, 2016; Slutzker, 2018). Just like ISIS, Boko Haram has made numerous videos depicting acts of brutality against civilians and military servicemen. Nevertheless, 2015 marked the first time a Boko Haram video depicted the execution of a captured Nigerian soldier (Nance, 2016). After this, the group made series of videos of kidnappings (e.g., of Chibok girls) and beheadings (Warner & Matfess, 2015). This use of media by Boko Haram is troubling given the effect it has on the general populace.

1.2. Significance of the study of imitative suicide terrorism

The study of copycat suicide terrorism, especially in Nigeria, is necessary given the urgent need to gain more insights on the best methods and practices for governments and

counterterrorism experts take proactive steps to prevent terror attacks. The importance of this study in this regard cannot be overemphasized. For example, the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) estimate all terrorist attacks that occurred from 1970 to 2015 and 19% of those attacks were suicide terrorist attacks. This illustrates that suicide terrorism is gradually gaining acceptance and more conventional for terrorist organizations; as noted earlier, the yearly incidence of suicide terrorism increased by 1,679% post-9/11 (Farnham & Liem, 2017). Consequently, experts in counterterrorism are advancing a number of innovative methods to deal with remote and proximate threats. This proactive measure can help governments of different countries to stay abreast of the imminent threats of suicide terrorism and terrorism in general (Harmon et al., 2018).

The study of copycat suicide terrorism is important because of the changing ways in which modern terrorist organizations (e.g., ISIS, Al Qaeda, Boko Haram, Al Shabaab) disseminate information. They increasingly "publish extremist material online in the form of digital magazines and videos" (Farnham & Liem, 2017, p. 6). They have evolved tremendously in their use of media platforms to foster high exposure to suicide bombing in order to instill fear in the public and thus realize their political objectives (Stern & Berger, 2015). Such media presentations "typically have a value-reinforcing effect that empowers their ideological and strategic narratives and generates a sense of solidarity among ideologically compatible readers" (Farnham & Liem, 2017, p. 6). Hence, the media may act as either a willing or unwilling accomplice in acceding these organizations an audience. For example, before he carried out the 2016 terror attack in Nice, France; Mohamad Lahouaiej-Bouhle was purported to have searched for media reports of prior attacks, including the shooting in a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, and the incident of a terrorist who drove his car into a terrace café in Nice, both of which occurred earlier in the same year. This demonstrates that media can present a kind of "cultural script" for suicide terrorists (Farnham & Liem, 2017; Larkin, 2009; Nossiter, Blaise, & Rubin, 2016). Recognizing the role, the media play and their influence on suicidal behaviors will help to highlight and increase knowledge of suicide terrorism and the factors that drive it (Farnham & Liem, 2017; GTD, 2017).

2. Literature review

2.1. Copycat Suicide Studies

Sociologist David Phillips was one of the foremost scholars in the study of copycat/imitative suicide. In one key study, Phillips (1974) identified a significant upswing in the rate of suicide in the aftermath of stories on suicide which were copiously publicized by the media, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom. Later research works have suggested the significant effect that media publication of suicide cases can

exert on suicidal behaviors among individuals who read or view the media information (Nacos, 2009; Stack, 2003). Yet, outside the works of Farnham and Liem (2017) and Surette (2002, 2014, 2016, 2017), there remain few studies on copycat suicide terrorism in other disciplines, even in criminal justice and counterterrorism studies. Thus far, the scholarship to examine the level of copycat effect remains inconclusive and controversial.

The evidence so far is that Philips' (1974) findings have rarely been extended outside the domain of suicide studies, such as homicide suicides. The low number of such cases may have hampered the quantitative research methodologies like the one employed by Philips (cited in Farnham & Liem, 2017). A search of current empirical literature on the copycat effect, for example, concluded that publicizing suicide cases has a significant effect on the rate of suicide. This happens especially if the newspaper article is filled with gory images or detailed descriptions of the method used, or if the coverage glorifies or romanticizes the act (Farnham & Liem, 2017). As noted above, the evidence for the copycat effect outside the domain of suicide is still lacking. Some prior studies on child homicide, and murder-suicide, failed to identify evidence of the copycat effect (Farnham & Liem, 2017). In terms of methodology used, apart from quantitative studies tried by Philips (1974); Farnham and Liem (2017) used an exploratory approach in incorporating open-data resources as well as mixed methodologies to the study of copycat suicide terrorism. They examined terrorist suicide attack clusters, and analyzed the correlation between attacks within the same cluster. In their analyses, they did not find evidence to support a copycat effect among the studied attacks (Farnham & Liem, 2017). Through this, the two scholars pioneered a methodology for studying copycat suicide terrorism, given that it is a rare occurrence. Surette (2016) tried to identify ways to measure copycat suicide terrorism. Given the urgency of the topic, this paper uses the above pioneers' frameworks to extend the study of copycat suicide to sub-Saharan Africa. Also, the work of Farnham and Liem (2017) focused on pre-social media era in their examination of copycat effect, but this paper concentrates on the era of social media and networking.

Other research works have been on the forefront of the study of copycat crime. For example, Surette (2002) discussed the effect of media on juveniles, using instances of self-reported copycat crime in violent juvenile offenders. He concluded that copycat behavior correlates with media-reported news. Other indicators for measuring copycat crime were adapted from extant literatures on crime. In addition, research has identified a coherent methodology for systematic measurement of copycat crime (Surette, 2016) based on time order, time proximity, theme consistency, scene specificity, repetitive viewing, self-editing, and the statements of offenders and second parties. An estimate of the prevalence of copycat crime was conducted based on a meta-analysis of self-reported copycat crimes in 10 scholarly works that cut across five decades. The study

concluded that the prevalent estimate has figures that are varied too widely to draw any useful generalization in all the works studied (Surette, 2014). Yet the study to examine whether a copycat effect can be discerned remains thin, especially in a country like Nigeria.

Research on copycat suicide terrorism has been mainly focused on two areas: copycat or imitative suicide and suicide terrorism (Philips, 1974; Farnham & Liem, 2017; Surette, 2014).

2.2. Copycat or Imitative Suicide

In the aspect of imitative suicide, a media-inspired copycat effect has been established as "the Werther effect." This term was coined by Philip (1974), inspired by the fictional hero who takes his own life in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, known in English as *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774/1989). The book was a sensation; soon after the publication of the book in 1774, many young men started to imitate the main character's characteristic dress of yellow pants and blue jackets (Meyer, 2009), sparking a new fashion trend. In the novel, Werther shoots himself with a pistol after being rejected by a woman he loves. In its day, the book was blamed for a purported upswing in firearm suicides among young men across Europe. The portrayal of suicide in the book gave rise to a stream of research, which in turn led to the formulation of responsible media practices for reporting and depicting suicidal behavior (O'Carroll & Potter, 1994; Philips, Lesyna, & Paight, 1992; Stack, 1987).

Research has demonstrated that those who imitate crime as seen in the media (e.g., news and violent movies) often have prior criminal records, severe mental problems, or histories of violence. This may suggest that the effects of media are indirect, mainly influencing the particulars of criminal behavior rather than affecting the number of criminals (Surette, 2002). This opinion stands in contrast to various studies that have placed the blame for copycat behavior solely on media. Indeed, media can present a script to individual on how to commit the crime (Philip, 1974, Surette, 2002, 2017). However, Tufekci (2012) suggested that the type of coverage a crime incident (e.g., suicide bombing) receives can determine the course another criminal might take. This seems likely, given that most copycat criminals are motivated in part by the sensational effects of their action; these perpetrators unleash maximum violence to receive media attention and instill fear on general population.

Later research on imitative suicide attacks focused mainly on prevention through media (e.g., Sisak, Merike & Vǎrnik, 2017). With this in mind, the term "Papageno effect" was coined to describe the phenomenon whereby a non-suicide alternative is demonstrated to the public during a time of crisis. The name is derived from Papageno, a lovelorn character in the eighteenth-century opera *The Magic Flute*, who considers

suicide until other characters present him a different manner to deal with his problems (Sisak & Vărnik, 2017). Moreover, some researchers have developed reporting guidelines for journalists to reduce the possibility that their media coverage will inspire a copycat effect (for example, the work of Gould and Tene, cited in Kolod, 2018). In spite of all these efforts, researchers have failed to discuss copycat suicide terrorism in relation to sub-Saharan Africa, let alone devise prevention efforts. This paper fills this gap by getting to the root of copycat crime, as well as contributing to the literature. It is also tenable given that there is a prevalence of suicide terrorism in the most populous Black country, Nigeria, which sometimes take a cue from incidents in the Middle East and North Africa (BBC, 2017; IEP, 2018).

2.3. Suicide Terrorism

Another well researched area investigated in the prior literature on the copycat effect is terrorism. Some studies of terrorism (Berkowitz & Macaulay,1971; Nacos, 2009) have disputed the ability of media coverage to trigger copycat terrorist attacks. Ample anecdotal information exists, though, the terrorist acts such as kidnapping, bank robberies in which hostages are taken, airline and parachute hijacking, placement of altitude bombs on airplanes, suicide attacks or bombings, and beheadings of hostages exhibit a media-modeled connection (Horowitz, 2015; Surette, 2014, 2017). Most information on copycat terrorism is sifted from anecdotal documents on media publication of terrorist attacks that correlate with a prior successful attack. For example, there are many incidents of beheading of foreign nationals by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS), and videos documenting these atrocities are often posted on social media (Nance, 2016).

The palpable flaws in this anecdotal evidence lie in its validity. It is always difficult to decipher whether an act of terror is taken a cue from prior reported incident in the media. Anecdotal information relies mainly on the media characterization of an event, which might be false or manipulated—all too common, given recent technological advances in manipulation of still and video images—or be tainted by a contagion effect. Indeed, it is sometimes hard to determine which explanation is more plausible (Surette, 2002, 2014).

Researchers have sought to explain and understand the phenomenon of suicide terrorism through a number of analytical positions and from a variety of vantage points. They have examined its definitions (Khan, Goldney, & Hassan, 2010), its origins (Atran, 2003), its global history, and the methodologies used to study it (Ashworth, Clinton, Meirowitz & Ramsey, 2008). Other scholars sought to understand the operationalization and efficacy of suicide bombings (Pape, 2008), the motivations of suicide bombers (Rosenberger, 2003), suicide bombing as a terrorist innovation (Horowitz, 2010),

and the strategic logic of suicide bombings (Pape, 2005). Still others have examined the extent of rationality (Sprinzak, 2009) and/or psychosis behind suicide bombers (Aggarwal, 2015), the connection of rationality and culture in suicide bombing (Hafez, 2006), and the social, (Pedahzur & Perliger, 2006), familial (Azam, 2005), and political elements of the phenomenon (Wade & Reiter, 2007).

One body of research has investigated the issue of suicide terrorism as employed by both historical and contemporary terrorist organizations, including Al Qaeda (Moghadam, 2008), the Islamic State (Ellis, 2016,) Chechen rebels (Kurz & Bartles, 2007), the Tamil Tigers (Somasundaram, 2010), Hezbollah (Azam, 2005), and the Kurdistan Workers' Party or PKK (Kim &Yun, 2008). Most relevant to this research, Warner and Matfess (2017) looked at the unexpected operational and demographic characteristics of Boko Haram's suicide bombers. But despite all the scholarly works on Boko Haram and other terrorist organizations who used suicide bombing as a toolkit for violence, there remains insufficient evidence for a correlation between suicide bombings perpetrated by Boko Haram and precursors in Iraq and Syria in the Middle East and North Africa.

3. Methods

Using an explanatory sequential mixed method, this research examines a possible correlation between 45 incidents of suicide terrorism in Iraq, all of which were sensationally reported in the media, and 45 incidents of suicide terrorism perpetrated by Boko Haram in Nigeria from 2012–2016. Given that Boko Haram has demonstrated its connection to and admiration for other terrorist organizations in the Middle East, through media channels Boko Haram has been shown to have copied the suicide terrorist attacks by these organizations (e.g., ISIS, Al Qaeda) operating in Iraq and Syria. Therefore, we also investigated whether this seeming relationship can determine future Boko Haram suicide bombings, to improve the Nigerian government's proactive response to terrorism.

This research utilized explanatory sequential mixed method design, which presents a "pragmatic worldview [in its] collection of both quantitative and qualitative data sequentially in the design" (Creswell, 2014, p. 19). The explanatory sequential mixed method best suits the two-phase nature of the project, in which quantitative data are collected in the first phase, and the results analyzed and used to plan (or build on to) the second, qualitative phase. The quantitative findings typically inform the types of participants to be purposefully selected for the qualitative phase (Creswell, 2014). this design is useful for research students, being easier to accomplish than other designs like convergent design because analysis proceeds independently of other phases; one database follows the other and data collection can be spaced over time (Creswell, 2014,

p. 225). The data analysis procedure followed the steps below: (a). The number incidence of suicide used was generated from the data sources (Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism's *Suicide Attack Database* (CPOST-SAD) and the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), where a sample of suicide attacks that fall within the criteria of the 30-day mark (Philips, 1974) and exhibits the seven-point characteristics (Surette, 2016) were chosen randomly with Qualtrics. (b). A descriptive analysis of the data for all independent and dependent variables in the study was performed with statistical software SPSS {Statistical Package for Social Sciences} (Creswell, 2014). (c). Identified the statistics and the statistical computer program for testing the major inferential research questions in the study namely Pearson correlation and analysis of the variance, ANOVA. Finally, the results are presented in tables or figures and interpreted from the statistical tests. This means conclusions are drawn from the results regarding the research questions and limitations (Creswell, 2014).

4. Result

The overall scores of incidents used to examine the relationship and differences between generator suicide attacks in Iraq and Syria and imitative suicide attacks by Boko Haram were trimmed to 100 from the initial 191 incidents. When the Qualtrics calculator for sample size was applied, this number was further trimmed to 135, with primary generator crime ($n = 45$) (i.e., incidents of suicide attacks in Iraq), secondary generator crime ($n = 45$) (i.e., incidents of suicide attacks in Syria) and imitative suicide attacks ($n = 45$) (i.e., incidents of suicide attacks by Boko Haram in Nigeria). In the descriptive statistics in Table 1, it is concluded that primary generator suicide attacks ($M = 19.3$) and secondary generator crimes ($M = 6.3$) score higher than imitative suicide attacks ($M = 4.5$); while the two scores had the standard deviation ($S.D = 10$ and $S.D = 4.3$), respectively.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for All Variables

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	*Minimum*	*Maximum*	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*
1st Generator Suicide attacks in Iraq	45	2.00	41.00	19.3778	10.13161
2nd Generator Suicide attacks in Syria	45	1.00	15.00	6.3556	4.51842
Imitative Suicide attacks by Boko Haram Nigeria	45	1.00	23.00	4.5778	4.37705
Valid *N* (listwise)	45				

The Pearson correlation is used to examine between sets of bivariate data: 45 incidents of suicide terrorist attacks in Iraq (independent variable: primary generator crime) sensationally reported around the world from 2012–2016, and about 45 incidents of suicide terrorist attacks (dependent variable: copycat crime) perpetrated by Boko Haram from 2012–2016. The Pearson correlation was used because it is the best fit to determine a linear relationship between incidents of suicide terrorist attacks in Iraq and incidents of suicide terrorist attacks by Boko Haram in Nigeria.

The null hypothesis for the question above is stated thus: there is no correlation between reported suicide terrorist attacks as seen in Iraq and the incidents of suicide terrorist attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram in Nigeria from 2012–2016. This is symbolically designated as: $H_{o:\acute{\rho}} = 0$ and $H_{1:}\acute{\rho} \neq 0$; $\acute{\rho}$ = rho. The level of significance is at $\ddot{\alpha}$ = .05, degree of freedom in the sample size, df = 44.

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was conducted to assess the relationship between incidents of primary generator suicide attacks and incidents of imitative suicide attacks. There was a moderate positive correlation between reported primary generator suicide attacks in Iraq and imitative suicide attacks in Nigeria, which was statistically significant r (44) = .418, n = 45, p = .004).

The complete output of Pearson correlations is presented in **Table 2**.

Correlation Matrix of Generator Suicide Attacks and Imitative Suicide Attack

Correlations

		Generator Suicide attacks in Iraq Middle East	*Imitative Suicide attacks by Boko Haram Nigeria*
Generator Suicide attacks in Iraq Middle East	Pearson Correlation	1	.418**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
	N	45	45
Imitative Suicide attacks by Boko Haram Nigeria	Pearson Correlation	.418**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
	N	45	45

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Overall, we conclude that there was a moderate positive correlation between primary generator suicide attacks and imitative suicide attacks. An increase in the primary generator suicide attacks in Iraq correlated with an increase in imitative suicide attacks in Nigeria.

However, statistical analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the incidents of suicide attacks in Iraq and Syria in the Middle East and in Nigeria in the Lake Chad basin region of West Africa in a bid to analyze the differences and identify copycat effects.

In ANOVA analyses, ($n = 45$) the independent variables (generator suicide attacks) are used here as categorical variables with 5 groups of incidents representing the years 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016. These years are designated as models, e.g., 2012 model, 2013 model, and so on. The dependent variable employed in this research is considered as a continuous variable, which are ($n = 45$) scores of incidents of imitative suicide attacks in Nigeria. All the assumptions for ANOVA are met.

A one-way ANOVA between subjects was conducted to compare the effects and differences of the independent (categorical: ordinal) variables, primary and secondary generator suicide attacks in Iraq, on the dependent continuous variables, imitative suicide attacks by Boko Haram in Nigeria over a 5-year span (2012–2016). There were no significant effects by incidents of primary generator suicide attacks on the scores of imitative suicide attacks at the $p < .05$ level for the 5 model years (2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016). [F (1,44) = .822, p = .673]. I therefore conclude that there was no significant effect of the generator suicide attacks in Iraq on imitative suicide attacks in Nigeria.

Table: 3 ANOVA Imitative suicide attacks

ANOVA

Imitative Suicide attacks by Boko Haram Nigeria

	Sum of Squares	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
Between Groups	361.311	2	17.205	.822	.673
Within Groups	481.667	43	20.942		
Total	842.978	45			

Discussion

Incidents of suicide terrorism have increased in the last two decades around the world, especially after 9/11 (Sheehan, 2014); there is also a shift in trend from the Middle East to sub-Saharan Africa and Asia (IEP, 2018). Suicide terrorism by Boko Haram in Nigeria is one of the obvious manifestations of this shifting landscape of terrorism. This necessitated an inquiry into the relationship between incidents of suicide terrorism as seen in Iraq and Syria and incidents of suicide terrorist attacks in Nigeria reported in media from 2012–2016. The timeframe (2012–2016) represents the height of suicide terrorism in Iraq, Syria, and Nigeria (IEP, 2016).

As regards the correlation between incidents of suicide attacks in Iraq and Nigeria, we see that there is a moderate positive correlation, statistically significant at r (44) = .418, n = 45, p = .004. This can be interpreted as a positive trend; an increase in the incidence of suicide attacks in Iraq from 2012–2016 correlated with the increase in suicide attacks in Nigeria from 2012–2016. This might not reflect a causal relationship, but the level of the strength of the relationship. Further, this finding here did align with that proposed by Philips (1974), who investigated the copycat effect in suicide. Philips' (1974) research may have suffered a setback given that he used a small sample to do a quantitative study (Farnham & Liem, 2017; Philips, 1974). But Farnham and Liem (2017) used a mixed-method design and extended the research on the copycat effect beyond suicide-to-suicide terrorism, which indicates that the perpetrators of copycat suicide terrorism are indeed triggered by preceding attacks and do replicate the same. The two scholars concluded that publicization of suicide did actually correlate with the increase in cases of suicide, but reiterated that evidence of a copycat effect outside the ambience of suicide studies is lacking. On the issue of correlation between incidents reported in media and attendant incidents of copying it; Surette (2002) found that imitative behavior or behavior that is copied indeed correlates with the original incident reported in the media. In the case of this research, the primary generator crime correlates with subsequent imitative or copycat crime.

This finding that demonstrated a correlation between suicide terrorist attacks by terrorist groups in Iraq and Nigeria from 2012–2016 can be tenable, given the mutual and longstanding relationship existing between Boko Haram and other terrorist organizations. One scholar even depicted Boko Haram as showing tremendous respect and loyalty to other terrorist organizations, especially Al Qaeda, Al Shabaab in Somalia, and other Al Qaeda affiliates, whom they regarded as their big brothers (McCoy, 2014). Furthermore, after 9/11, Boko Haram was one of the beneficiaries of magnanimity of Osama Bin Laden who sent monetary aid of about $3 million in local currency which was shared among those Islamic terrorist organizations in Nigeria that identified with Al Qaeda's mission of imposing strict Sharia laws. The Boko Haram spokesperson who addressed the press up to 53 times, Abu Qaqa (McCoy, 2014), corroborated this when he affirmed that other terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb helped and supported them in their overall struggle against the forces that they deemed contrary to the true Islam (Nossiter & Kirkpatrick, 2014). Therefore, the fact that there is a moderate correlation between incidents of suicide attacks in Iraq and incidents of suicide attacks in Nigeria by Boko Haram cannot be surprising. It is indicative and suggestive of the mutual but complicated relationship existing between the groups. This is arguably crucial, regardless of the extent of this relationship, especially when we consider Boko Haram's prior affiliations with other terrorist organizations as regards

the funding and sharing of training and necessary support. In this light, correlation between attacks in Iraq and Nigeria makes sense (Joscelyn, 2014).

Nevertheless, when the scores of suicide attacks in Iraq, Syria, and Nigeria were examined to identify differences, copycat effects, and suicide attack clusters, the results showed no significant effect of primary and secondary generator crimes by the imitative crime in those 5 years (2012–2016). This means that the incidents of suicide terrorism in Iraq and Syria did not differ substantially from those of suicide terrorist incidents in Nigeria perpetrated by Boko Haram from 2012–2016 in terms of characteristics like targets, timing, and weapons. Simply put, the primary and secondary generator crimes in Iraq and Syria from 2012–2016 moved in the same direction with imitative crime in Nigeria. This means that as the generator crime increases, the copycat or imitative crime increases. This result tallies implicitly in terms of its meaning with the result of the correlation discussed already in the research.

In addition to the results above, sensational media reports about violent suicide attacks in Iraq and Syria from 2012–2016 clearly resulted in further suicide attacks by Boko Haram. This happened through imitation in terms of target and method. This is a copycat effect, per Coleman (2004). Therefore, one can conclude that from the data drawn from GTD on suicide attacks in Iraq, Syria and Nigeria from 2012–2016, a copycat can be established. But as for ascertaining if there are suicide attack clusters in Nigeria precisely, the finding did not uncover much suicide attack clusters given that the spread of suicide attacks in Nigeria through institutions like schools or communities did not happen on a nationwide scale (Coleman, 2004). In other words, the prevalence of the spread of the imitative suicide attacks by Boko Haram were mainly restricted to northeastern Nigeria, not excluding pockets of suicide attacks around the Lake Chad basin; but the group's attacks are widespread, extending to Chad, Niger, and Cameroon (Warner & Matfess, 2017). This finding did not contradict the work of Farnham and Liem (2017), who found no copycat effect in their research; this lends credence to their critique of Philips (1974) as lacking when the copycat effect is examined outside suicide cases. Therefore, media reporting on suicide terrorist attacks can elicit behavioral imitation of such incidents, but our findings suggest that media coverage may indirectly affect criminal behavior but not the number of criminals (Surette, 2002; 2017).

5.1. Recommendations and Future Studies

I have uncovered more facts on the phenomenon of copycat suicide terrorism, especially in reference to Boko Haram in Nigeria. In a practical sense, I will make various recommendations to mitigate the impact of imitative suicide attacks and terrorism in general, along with recommendations for future studies and an analysis of policy implications.

I have noted in preceding pages that the data of incidences used came from open-source databases; these are not without problems. This has hindered examining directly the influence of media exposure on imminent attacks. Future studies should establish some method of identifying copycat indicators, or conducting another form of quantitative analysis of media coverage, when examining the effects of media on terrorist attacks (Farnham & Liem, 2017). A two-way research method analyses might be advanced, where results obtained from databases might be used to conduct an inquiry by fishing through the body of media literature in a region. Another way to conduct this analysis would be by adding to frequencies of word-diagram against a cumulative database of social media sources to induce a statistical relationship (Farnham & Liem, 2017). This will enable a clear analysis and reduce the speculation associated with research findings from database, allowing more precise research on the copycat effect.

In addition, some years after 9/11, I saw use of multiple databases, sometimes conflicting in some aspects. These can make research endeavors on copycat suicide terrorism difficult. Research has shown that many scholars of suicide terrorism mainly use the Global Terrorism Database; but there are other databases on suicide bombing. There has to be a way of sharing or corroborating data which uses the comparative approach crucial to increasing the reliability and validity of results (Horowitz, 2015).

Studies have noted that copycat terrorist criminals ideologically align with people who share similar ideal with them through imitation and identification (Cialdini, 1993; Glaser, 1958; Kolod, 2018). Future studies should investigate nonideological suicide attacks, and the factors that prompt individual bombers to align with people with whom they share similar characteristics. It is possible that some individuals may have undertaken suicide attacks purely inspired by anger, resentment, and fame-seeking, without recourse to ideology or connection with terror organization. Future studies on copycat suicide terrorism must therefore examine other motivations besides ideological ties that can strongly compel an individual to take his own life in order to kill others.

Furthermore, as noted, one of the significances of the research on copycat suicide terrorism will help to paint a clear crime picture. This is specifically necessary in this era where we can expect a rise in performance crimes (i.e., criminal acts made for social-media dissemination) and celebrity-dominated culture (Penfold-Mounce, 2009; Surette, 2015, 2017). Currently, the supposed empirical inferences by scholars as regards media influence on the copycat effect are vitiated by lack of empirical work. This is solely as a result of a near-absence of unified measurement of the copycat phenomenon. Future studies must investigate further metrics for copycat crime—or at least improve on what we have outside of Surette's (2016) seven indicators model and Farnham and Liem's (2017) Philip 30-day interval model. Better knowledge

of copycat trends, coupled with unified measurements, will help in making crucial decisions in criminal justice policy, and in unmasking the potential risk factors that dispose individuals or groups to commit crime. Therefore, well thought-out metrics are vitally needed (Surette, 2016).

Despite stream of research on suicide terrorism; research on copycat suicide terrorism is still nascent and evolving. This research and some other research mentioned earlier (e.g., Surette, 2002, 2014, 2015, 2017; Farnham & Liem, 2017) are still on exploratory level. By using some methods or metrics (e.g., Philip (1974) 30 days mark interval, and Surette (2016) metrics – 7 indicators of copycat crime, statistical analyses) to study and decipher copycat suicide terrorism; this author is trying to evoke and stimulate ideas. As well, we contribute to body of literature and influence criminal justice and counterterrorism policies not only in Africa, but around the world. Moreover, by using known criminological theories and other ways above to research on copycat crime or in form of copycat suicide terrorism, we are attempting a fundamental change in approach in the study of terrorism to yield a new phenomenon or a theory, a kind of paradigm shift per Kuhn (1962).

As noted previously on the statement of the problem that there is still inherent difficulty in identifying copycat crime (e.g., copycat suicide terrorism). Whereas other forms of crime can be studied quantitatively and carefully cataloged under official law enforcement statistics, the unsettled debate over what constitute or defines copycat suicide terrorism means that such crimes are not reckoned in any systematic way (Clarke & McGrath, 1992; Surette, 2014). Therefore, future studies should strive to find the percentage of terrorist acts attributed to copycat suicide-related terrorist acts. Perhaps, this will enable the study of copycat suicide terrorism to be tallied in a systematic way to official law enforcement statistics.

5.2. Policy Implications

In order to gain better knowledge of copycat suicide terrorism in Nigeria, I conclude that policymakers should take notice of four innovative ideas that encapsulate the urgency of the phenomenon.

5.2.1. Doubling Down on the Tactic of Using Female and Child Bombers

Boko Haram's deployment of female and child bombers increased from 60% of bombings to 67.8 % from January 2016 to May 2017, even after President Buhari's declaration of the technical defeat of Boko Haram (Warner & Matfess, 2017). As I have noted, Boko Haram's functionalistic reason for using female bombers and children is simply that such tactics have proven effective for them in their campaigns; this menace will continue until Nigerian government's security apparatus devises and mounts a solid

buffer against them (Warner & Matfess, 2017). Emphatically, we anticipate more suicide attacks from Boko Haram and their affiliates as they continue to circumvent and exploit security loopholes, especially in Nigeria, where there are weaker institutions in the fight against terror.

5.2.2. Internally Displaced People's Camps: Temporary or Permanent

Boko Haram shifted its targeting from soft civilian spots to IDP camps. This is a new type of civilian target; people who escaped the scourge of terrorist attacks in their hometowns are mostly targeted for the same evil that caused them to be displaced in the first place (Warner & Matfess, 2017). As of December 2015, the International Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) noted that approximately 2,152,000 persons have been displaced by Boko Haram insurgency. Boko Haram times its attacks on the IDPs just as more people are entering the camps for protection. About 21.4% of Boko Haram's attacks in 2016 were centered on IDP camps (Warner & Matfess, 2017). Given this, the Nigerian government must change its strategy to deter Boko Haram's access to IDP Camps and protect the displaced persons. In particular, it must address the incessant security lapses that allow some members of the group to disguise themselves as women and children to attack the helpless civilian refugees. IDPs are temporary solutions, but the incompetent security apparatus of the Nigerian government means there is currently no end in sight for this crisis; in some cases, the camps are effectively permanent housing.

5.2.3. Tactical Defense and Proactive Counterinsurgent Policies

To mount a tactical defense against suicide bombing is difficult, even for a rich and well-coordinated security force. Currently, it appears that Nigeria's security apparatus is unlikely to be driven by innovative technology that can help to stem the tide of suicide bombings (Macdonald, 2013; Warner & Matfess, 2017). Nigeria could emulate Israel, which has taken anti-suicide technology to another level by procuring effective technology to carry out behavior profiling; but this is expensive and involves extensive training and human capital. Given the haphazard pattern of Boko Haram's attacks, the latent problem will be how to identify areas that urgently need protections and buffer zones (Warner & Matfess, 2017). The deployment of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) has helped, but the choice of areas earmarked for protection by the Nigerian government shows lack of proper knowledge of the Boko Haram's targeting trends (*Daily Trust*, 2017). Overall, the provision of a well-coordinated counterterrorist approach will depend on civilian and military collaboration to checkmate the menace of suicide bombings and reduce it to the barest minimum, if not stopping it completely.

5.2.4. Effective Counter-Messaging Drive

According to Warner and Matfess (2017) there are three counter-messaging drives that will help to mitigate Boko Haram's influence on suicide bombers.

(a) First, it is necessary to delegitimize the theological grounds for jihad. Efforts directed at this will go a long way to ending the individual commitment to undertake suicide bombing, especially on justification of violence against nonbelievers (Heneghan, 2010). Some Muslim scholars espouse and have used Ibn Taymiyyah's *fatwa,* an authoritative declaration in Islam, which is used as a pretext for violence against nonbelievers. Modern Salafi-jihadist groups like Boko Haram use this as justification for violence against civilians (Warner & Matfess, 2017). Further, the primary drive for suicide bombing lies in the theological teaching of Al Qaeda proponent Abdullah Azzam, who viewed suicide bombing not as suicide—which is a taboo in Islam—but as martyrdom (Moghadam, 2009). There has been a globalization of martyrdom via Salafi jihadi organizations, and this theology of martyrdom must be stymied through effective counter-messaging to prevent further radicalization which uses religion as a cover.

(b) Effective counter-messaging should be directed at the menace of Boko Haram's use of suicide attacks in the communities of northeastern Nigeria or other parts of West Africa. This should be community-oriented counter-messaging in order to alleviate the brunt of suicide bombing on these communities and expose the mechanism of targeting trends in Boko Haram recruitment (Warner & Matfess, 2017). Also, this counter-messaging is important because sympathizers of the group reside in different communities in northern Nigeria; the drive to delegitimize the ideology and theology of violence against civilians will go a long way to bringing peace that has eluded northeast Nigeria and around the Lake Chad basin.

(c) The counter-messaging drive should be directed at helping to rehabilitate ex-members of Boko Haram. The community should be sensitized on how best to treat and integrate these people, as well as taught them how to recognize possible signs or risk factors that will make or dispose individuals to join a terror group. In this direction, there has been an effort by the Nigerian government—Operation Safe Corridor, which aims at rehabilitation and deradicalization of ex-Boko Haram members through skill acquisitions and empowerment in social, educational, economic, and psychological areas (Deutsche Welle, 2022). However, for such deradicalization to be effective, the community must not stigmatize the ex-Boko Haram members, especially

women who had children with the fighters. Also, vigilante groups who are involved in helping Nigerian security to fight Boko Haram should be educated on the need to treat people with dignity and respect so that they do not turn into monsters themselves menacing the community they are helping to serve. As such, proper accountability must be observed at all times by incorporating law enforcement into their dealings, to curb excesses. Ideally, this is will be effective; but in a typical Nigerian environment, corruption may hamper this effort.

Conclusions

Given the rapprochement between Boko Haram and other terrorist organizations in Iraq and Syria which prompted copycat or imitative suicide terrorism, I argue that there is a correlation between the incidence of suicide attacks in Iraq and Nigeria from 2012–2016. This is the underlying assumption of the entire research. When I examined this relationship between 45 incidents of suicide attacks in Iraq and 45 incidents in Nigeria, we found a moderate but positive correlation. This ultimately brings to the fore that this relationship between terrorist organizations can dispose the considerably weaker group (not in terms of size but influence) to imitate its perceived "big brother" (McCoy, 2014).

Another purpose of this dissertation was to explore and to compare the incidents of suicide bombing in Iraq, Syria, and Nigeria within a 5-year period (2012–2016) looking for both differences and copycat effects. Analysis of the variance revealed that there was no significant effect of suicide attacks in Iraq and Syria on the incidence of suicide attacks in Nigeria at $F\,(1,44) = .822$, $p = .673$. I advanced that there are no differences in the direction of attacks, meaning that the attacks in the Middle East and West African regions tend to go in the same direction. Simply put, as suicide attacks by terrorist organizations in the Iraq and Syria increase, suicide attacks by other terrorist organizations in sub-Saharan Africa—like Boko Haram—increase as well. It must be noted that there was no suicide cluster found from the data. I concluded that though Boko Haram made use of suicide terrorism more than other terrorist groups in Africa, the publicity surrounding its attacks did not create a wave of similar attacks nationally in Nigeria. Therefore, suicide attacks clusters (or waves) caused by social learning of suicide-related behavior, or a copycat effect, were not established from our data.

Also, I reviewed how sensationally reported incidents of suicide in Iraq and Syria can determine a copycat suicide bombing and lethality in Nigeria. This finding could potentially help governments and relevant counterterrorism experts, especially in Nigeria, to gain more important insights on how to monitor trends in suicide attacks and thus remain proactive in the event of possible threat of terror. Analysis of data obtained in this

paper shows that the reported incidents of suicide attacks in the Middle East can indeed determine future imitative suicide attacks in sub-Saharan Africa.

However, I can adduce from other questions raised from the research whether Boko Haram terrorist group was really aware of the preceding attacks, or possibly colluded with terrorist groups in the Middle East. I can argue that given the allegiances of Boko Haram to other terror networks in Middle East, and the funding and sharing of information among them, they almost certainly have full knowledge of attacks in the Middle East which they replicated or in some cases surpassed (Kolod, 2018). This is what shifted the landscape of terror from the Middle East to Africa and Asia (IEP, 2017). But Boko Haram's lethality and tactics, when compared to other terror groups, are lower. That said, the group uses suicide attacks as tactic more than any other terror group in Africa. Lethality by Boko Haram suicide attacks is relatively low among other terrorist groups, but the use of suicide attacks as tool of violence is pronounced among the group (Warner & Matfess, 2017). Nevertheless, the targeting trend of Boko Haram attacks is surprising; it directed its attacks at civilian soft spots instead of those institutions it professed to abhor, namely Western academic and government institutions and people of other faiths (non-Muslims).

From our data and other sources, we examined the timing and demographic profile of Boko Haram terrorists. This was done to shed more light on the times the group is highly active and to know the profile of people involved. This helps counterterrorism experts to adapt and stay abreast of the ever-changing tactics of Boko Haram. I found that Boko Haram is mainly active in the months of June and July around northeastern Nigeria and the Lake Chad basin, and operated predominantly on Sundays. Among the years under our study (2012-2016), 2015 has the highest number suicide attack with about 92 cases (Warner & Matfess, 2017). Also, I discovered that the demographic profile of Boko Haram has changed with the group's decision to use female and child bombers. I concluded that both male and female bombers participated actively in suicide bombings, but about 56% of the bombers were female (Warner & Matfess, 2017; Sheehan, 2014). In this aspect, Boko Haram surpassed other terrorist groups.

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