

A Feminist Analysis of the Global Adoption of the Hashtag #BringBackOurGirls

By
Ebunoluwa Grace Oladele

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Approved: Dr. Marnina Gonick
Supervisor

Approved: Dr. Michele Byers
Reader

Approved: Dr. Susan Brigham
External Examiner

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Abstract

This thesis explores the framing of #BringBackOurGirls on twitter and in the mainstream media, particularly through the lens of third world feminism. Using feminist content analysis, it explores themes extracted from the Nigerian twitter and North American/European twitter and reveals a larger discussion and perspectives of Nigerians and non-Nigerians, concerning the kidnapping of the Chibok girls. It finds that themes extracted from the Nigerian twitter were based on lived experiences, while themes found in the North American/European twitter were influenced by uninformed opinions of third world countries. It finds that social media activism tends to lead to slacktivism and the mainstream media outside of Nigeria is mostly influenced by the political interests of their nation-states. Finally, it finds that the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls not only addresses the oppressions of third-world women, but also exposes issues of political corruption, inefficiencies and the importance of international policies that protect the security of women.

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Chapter one: Introduction

Security and safety have been issues faced by girls and women in Third World countries such as Nigeria for centuries. According to the 2018 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report, “adult women account for nearly half (49 per cent) of all human trafficking victims detected globally. Women and girls together account for 72 per cent, with girls representing more than three out of every four child trafficking victims. More than four out of every five trafficked women and nearly three out of every four trafficked girls are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation” (Global Report on Trafficking Persons, 2018: 25). The hashtag #BringBackOurGirls birthed necessary conversations about the kidnapping of over 200 girls, the insecurities that third world women face, and issues related to women in the international system more generally. #BringBackOurGirls refers to the kidnapping of over 200 secondary school girls in the Chibok community of Borno state, in the north-eastern part of Nigeria, in April 14, 2014. This kidnapping was discussed by Nigerians and non-Nigerians on social media and in the mainstream media, and, as a result, varying perspectives concerning the incident and the rescue efforts that followed came to the attention of the global community. The perspectives, which emerged from different social media users across the world, ignited my curiosity as to the interpretations these different users made of the kidnapping.

My study discusses the origins of these varying perspectives on the kidnapping of the Chibok girls, the users’ different interpretations of these events, and how the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls was adopted by Nigerians and non-Nigerians. Using the lens of Third World Feminism, I am specifically interested in interpretations made by

people from the global north. I also discuss the Nigerian sociopolitical context that surrounded the kidnapping of the Chibok girls.

Researching the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls has impacted me personally, as it made me reflect on the security of young women in Nigeria, both in the north and south. My background in Political Science and International Relations also made me interested in how this research could, potentially, positively impact women globally. As a Yoruba girl living in the south-western part of Nigeria, I always wondered about and feared for the lives of young women my age in the northern part of Nigeria. I was born and bred in the city of Ibadan, about a forty-five minutes' drive from Lagos. The religion in this part of the country is equal parts Christian and Muslim, where both religions are to a large extent tolerant of each other and there is freedom of practice. This part of Nigeria is also economically buoyant: Lagos is the economic capital of Nigeria and the entertainment capital of Africa. Foreign investors flock to the south-western part of Nigeria and contribute to the growing economy. I was not born with a silver spoon, but my family was comfortable. Comfortable enough that I could be educated in private schools and we could take summer vacation trips to the United States and Canada. It is certainly a privilege, and such is the life of most middle-class families in the southern part of Nigeria.

Northern Nigeria, on the other hand, is predominantly Muslim, and the practice of Islam must be strictly adhered to. Despite being home to many influential entrepreneurs and politicians, this part of the country is also home to over five million people living below the poverty line (UNDP Report, 2017). The northern part of Nigeria has been subjected to ethnic and religious conflicts since the Nigerian Civil War in 1966. Gradually, these conflicts created a platform for disgruntled youths and Islamic extremists who supported the harsh practices of Sharia law. Sharia Law is

known for severe punishments such as amputating a person's hand for theft and stoning for the crime of adultery (Abdulla and Keshavjee, 2018).

Living in the southern part of Nigeria, and being unaware of the realities, experiences and intensity of poverty, insecurities and conflict in the northern part, sometimes makes me feel like Nigeria is a tale of two countries. While what happens in the six northern states in terms of conflicts and terrorist acts is often reported via newspapers and news headlines, the Nigerian Federal government usually makes light of the situations, informing its' citizens that everything is under control.

I was in Northern Ireland when the Chibok girls were kidnapped by Boko Haram in July 2014 and I was certain that the girls would be found in a matter of one month. I was quite confident that the Nigerian military, which is famous for helping other African countries during their civil wars, would quickly locate the girls. I was also sure that, in the worst case, the International Security Council would intervene, and Boko Haram would be brought to justice. I was wrong. 112 girls are still missing, six years later. The kidnapping of the Chibok girls is the background story of the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls and shall be discussed further in this chapter.

During my course work in Women and Gender Studies, I learnt of and became interested in feminist schools of thought such as postcolonial feminism (Tyagi, 2014), third-world feminism, and transnational feminism (Mohanty, 1991; Swaar and Nagar, 2003). I realized how these theories intersect with politics and the use of power, which, ultimately, affects policies that impact women globally. 112 Chibok girls are still in captivity; it has become clear that the rescue mission for these girls is a complex web revealing the inefficiency of the Nigerian army and government and the ineffectual reaction of the international community. I believe that the behavior and response of the international community is crucial to the rescue of these girls. By

‘international community’ to mean every all individuals, as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations, inside and outside of Nigeria. I believe that an examination of the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls will reveal diverse layers of discourses ranging from girls’ right to education, to the historical corruption of the Nigerian government. Hence my desire to approach this study via the theory of third-world feminisms. The application of the theory of third-world feminism to the use of the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls will create a platform to understand how the hashtag is adopted by Nigerians and non-Nigerians.

In this thesis, I explore how the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls was used on twitter by Nigerians and as well as citizens of the global north, specifically North Americans and Europeans. My interest is in the messages and recurring themes that can be deduced from these comments, and in the differences between these recurring themes based on the country of origin, nationality and possibly race and religion of the twitter users who posted them. Although headlines from mainstream media will not be used as units of analysis, I also examine how Nigerian *Channels TV* and international newspapers such as *New York Times* and *Washington Post* framed the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls in their reportage. This will reveal the importance of linking social media and mainstream media in qualitative content analysis and will enable me to create a robust discussion of the Twitter themes, particularly those related to the larger Nigerian historical and socio-political-cultural context of the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls. Finally, because third world feminism includes the experiences of oppressed women based on religion, culture and gender, the analysis of the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls depends on the perspective of an African feminist. This is because the kidnapping of the Chibok girls is a result of the insecurity and

oppression Nigerian women face. This will be further discussed in the Analysis chapter.

Boko Haram: A Brief Overview

Boko Haram, labeled a terrorist group in Nigeria, has been given different names such as '*Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'a 'ala Minhaj as-Salaf*, meaning "People of the Tradition of the Prophet and the Group according to the Salafist Method"; and *Jama'at Ahl al-Sunnah li Da'wah wal Jihad*, which means "Community of the People of the Tradition for Preaching and Holy War" (Faluyi, Khan et al, 2019:57). Members of the group however preferred to be called by its formal name, *Jamaa'at Ahlus-Sunnah lid-Da'wati wa' l-Jihad*, meaning 'Group of the People of Sunnah committed to Preaching and the Jihad (Anugwom, 2019). The term 'Boko Haram' was given to the group by residents of Maiduguri, which comes from a mixture of the Hausa and Arabic languages, loosely meaning "Western education is forbidden" (Okemi, 2013). According to Anugwom (2019), Boko Haram started as an Islamic religious group; Muhammed Yusuf was its leader before he was killed by the Nigerian Police.

The initial goal of Boko Haram was to spread the teachings of an undiluted, pure Islam, and to condemn westernisation and formal education. Most members of Boko Haram were youths who were marginalised politically and socio-economically. In other words, youths who were poor, uneducated, unemployed and disgruntled with the Nigerian society. Anugwom (2019) explains that "the Jihad they intended was not a violent one but an ideological one targeted at what they saw as unnecessary innovations in the practice of Islam in Nigeria. In 2009, the Nigerian

security forces engaged in a conflict against the sect which led to the killing of about 800 sect members and their leader Muhammed Yusuf¹ (46).

According to Kendhammer and McCain (2018), the insurgency of Boko Haram came to the fore during a showdown with local authorities in Maiduguri, in northeastern Nigeria. Over eight hundred Boko Haram members died, including leader Muhammed Yusuf who was executed while in police custody. This execution created a platform for the group to rebuild, declaring itself part of a violent jihadist war against the Nigerian state with plans to establish an Islamic state in place of the Nigerian government. Within a year of Muhammed Yusuf's death, his second-in-command, Abubakar Shekau emerged as the new leader. Under Shekau's leadership, the group began to launch attacks against the Nigerian Army. These attacks included a suicide bombing of the United Nations building in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria, in 2011 and various kidnappings.

A decade of continuous attacks by Boko Haram in the northern part of the Nigeria has left many people dead and displaced. According to the 2019 Global Terrorism Index, Boko Haram is among the four terrorist groups responsible for the most deaths.¹ Currently ranked number three, the group has displaced more than two million people and caused 22,415 deaths since 2013 (Global Terrorism Index, 2019).

Boko Haram: The Kidnapping of Chibok Girls

On April 14, 2014, the militant Islamist group Boko Haram kidnapped over 270 girls between the ages of 15 and 18 from a school in the Chibok community in

¹ The others are the Taliban, ISIL and Khorasan Chapter of the Islamic State.

the northeastern part of Nigeria. These girls were said to be studying for their final high school examinations when members of this group, wearing Nigerian military uniforms, invaded the school, reportedly to steal building supplies. They decided to kidnap the girls after discovering them studying. It is important to note that reports of planned attacks had been circulating among members of the Chibok community, but the local police had been slow to investigate; therefore, the schools and the girls were left unprotected (Kendhammer and McCain, 2018).

The kidnapping eventually became a global focus for local and foreign media and activists. Using the hashtag, #BBOG and #BringBackOurGirls, activists all over the world condemned the actions of Boko Haram. The Nigerian government, however, was slow to act, and was thus also condemned for this by both Nigerians and the international community. It was reported by *The Guardian* that the Nigerian government had refused offers of direct rescue assistance from western countries, although it accepted aid packages and equipment to help locate the girls. According to McQue (2017), the Nigerian government rebuffed an offer from the British government. According to the article, the Royal Air Force (RAF), in a mission named 'Operation Taurus,' conducted an air investigation over the northern Nigerian region for several months after the kidnapping. The girls were said to have been located within the first few weeks of the mission, but the Nigerian government refused help to liberate them. During an interview with *Channels Television*, one of Nigeria's major media houses, Adetokunbo Mumuni, the Director of *Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP)*, stated that seeking such assistance would not breach the sovereignty of the Nigerian government. He also stated that the Nigerian government had a duty under international law not only to seek international assistance but also to accept any such assistance when offered, as it is the basis of the

principle of international cooperation for the protection of human rights. (Channels Television, 2014). However, *Channels Television* also reported that the Nigerian government accepted assistance and expertise from the United States. It is not known if this assistance involved troops physically going to the front lines with the Nigerian army against Boko Haram, or training on equipment use.

According to Kendhammer and McCain (2018), “some but not all of the Chibok girls have been released from captivity following negotiations between the government and leaders of the Boko Haram faction that held them” (24). A *BBC News* article (18 May 2016), reported that one of the Chibok girls, “Amina Ali Nkeki was found carrying a baby with her Boko Haram husband by an army-backed vigilante group in the Sambisa forest, close to the border with Cameroon” (para. 1). On 13 October 2016, twenty-one girls were released in an exchange deal for Boko Haram detainees. This deal involved the International Red Cross and the Swiss government (Martin, 2016). *Al Jazeera* (5 November 2016) reported that one girl, Maryam Ali Maiyanga, was found by the Nigerian army with a ten-month old baby near the Sambisa forest. In 2017, it was reported in the *Premium Times* that “Rakiya Gali was rescued by the Nigerian military at north-eastern part of the country in 5 January 2017” (Okakwu, 2017). Reporting on *CNN*, Busari and McCleary (2017) stated that eighty-two girls were released “after negotiations between the terrorist group Boko Haram and the Nigerian government” (para. 1). Currently, at least twenty of the rescued Chibok girls are studying in the United States. On behalf of *Al Jazeera* news (2019), Mbah reported that some parents of the still missing 112 girls died due to heart attacks and grief-stricken illnesses. He further explained that other parents of the missing girls still regularly make the difficult journey of nearly 900km to Abuja, the

capital of Nigeria, to demand updates about their daughters from the Nigerian government.

The kidnapping of the Chibok girls in 2014 led to international outrage against Boko Haram for the first time, although the group had declared war against the Nigerian government and people as far back as 2009. The group's insurgencies included suicide bombings, kidnappings of young girls, and terrorist attacks against churches and mosques. The kidnapping of the Chibok girls became the "last straw" as both Nigerians and people all over the world protested against the group through the use of the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls. The hashtag which was used on social media by different people on diverse platforms has been the topic of much discussion. Notable people such as Michele Obama, who was the First Lady of the United States at the time of the kidnapping, Hillary Clinton and Hollywood actors like Angelina Jolie and George Clooney, used social media to publicly condemn the kidnapping and advocate for the rescue of the Chibok girls. In McNeil's words, "public awareness is no doubt a good thing, but that alone won't bring the Nigerian girls back home. This has left many Americans asking what they and their government can do to help" (2014; para. 2). Under public pressure, President Barack Obama sent a group of U.S. officials to Nigeria to aid in the search.

In order to understand the kidnapping and the global adoption of the hashtag, one must look back at the complex history of Nigeria, political corruption, ethnic conflict, and the religious differences that have plagued the country since before her independence in 1960 (Smith, 2015). To this end, this thesis seeks will discuss the local context that produced the events that lead to the production of the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls. Through the use of content analysis and third world feminism, I

discuss traces of western and transnational feminism that might be evident in the deployment of the #BringBackOurGirls hashtag.

Research Questions

Through the application of feminist content analysis, this thesis seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the Nigerian media discourses surrounding the #BringBackOurGirls?
2. How have non-Nigerians made use of the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls in their discussions?
3. What are the social and political implications of the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls in Nigeria?

My thesis is structured in the following chapters. Chapter Two is a review of relevant academic research on online activism. I also examine previous research that has been conducted by Nigerian researchers on the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls. Chapter Three gives an overview of the theoretical framework I will be using, which is third world feminism. I also discuss my method and methodology in this chapter. Here third world feminism and its application to social media research will be extensively discussed. I briefly examine traces of western feminism and transnational feminism as they unfold on social media, through the lens of third world feminism. I also describe my method, which is content analysis, and its application to the case of #BringBackOurGirls. Chapter Four is the analysis of my findings and provides a larger discussion of the themes derived from the data. Finally, Chapter Five concludes

my study, offering a discussion of the challenges encountered and offering considerations for further research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Hashtag Activism

According to Burgess (2011), the earliest form of hashtag activism began in September 2011 with the hashtag #OccupyWallStreet. Messina (2007) explains that San Francisco-based technologist Chris Messina first suggested the use of hashtags on twitter in mid-2007, both on twitter itself and in a post on his personal blog, titled “Groups for Twitter, or a Proposal for Twitter Tag Channels” (Messina, 2007). Twitter users first adopted the hashtag as a way of organizing online conversations, with Occupy Wall Street Movement activists coordinating spontaneous protests (Yaverbaum, 2015). Since then, social media sites, in particular twitter, have employed the use of hashtags to organize and promote social awareness campaigns, initiate demonstrations and marches, exchange stories, unite groups, and to bring about social change.

From the perspective of Bonilla (2015), the use of hashtags evolved from basic trends of pop culture to activism that affects the political, social and economic aspects of people’s lives. Using examples such as #Ferguson and #HandsUpDontShoot which circulated in the United States after the murder of Michael Brown, twitter offered African Americans the chance to protest against police brutality and supported media coverage. Vegh (2003) defines online activism as “a politically motivated movement relying on the internet.” He further states that online activism, is proactive, aims at

achieving certain goals and is usually targeted at “the controls and authorities imposing certain repressive restrictions” (2003:72). Additionally, Vegh categorizes online activism into three types:

...the first type is awareness/advocacy activism where individuals or independent organizations seek to highlight information or news that the mainstream media, either by commission or omission have misreported, under-reported or ignored. The second type is organization/mobilization and refers to activism which uses the internet to call for offline action such as a march, call for transfer of a typically offline action online, for instance calls for #BringBackOurGirls protests. The third category which Vegh calls action/reaction mostly relates to deliberate destructive online action such as hacking to draw attention to a cause or to cripple the targeted person or organization (73-75).

In addition to this, Yang (2016) describes hashtag activism as a “discursive agitation on social media unified by a word, phrase or sentence that is hash tagged” (13). Such campaigns also contribute to decentralized organization of analogous social causes (Bonilla and Rosa, 2015). An example is the #BlackLivesMatter protests which occurred in the streets and online (Williams, 2015).

Twitter enables the ‘live tweeting’ of events in real time. It offers on-the-ground perspectives at protest events, plays journalistic and advertisement roles, and helps political leaders draw publicity (Penney and Dadas, 2014). Retweeting, on the other hand, helps members or movement sympathizers who are not physically present at an event to continue disseminating knowledge and influencing public opinion (Bruns and Burgess, 2011; Khoja-Moolji, 2015; Penney and Dadas, 2014). Digital activism today “has been largely enabled by new media, and more specifically the phenomenon of

social media. The new media in question here is the internet, and mobile telephone technology that makes the internet accessible on the move” (Chibta, 2016:69).

Online Feminist Activism

Online feminist activism is a form of fourth-wave feminism, which “focuses on online technology, social media outlets such as twitter to provide an un-precedented means for solidarity and activism, as tweets can reach tens of thousands of people in one moment” (Zimmerman, 2017: 2). In articulating the genealogy of fourth wave feminism, Zimmerman states that “the term, however, did not reach a mainstream audience until 2008, surprisingly, between the years 2008 and 2013, the movement gathered scant attention in academic and popular publications. Still in its early development, scholars were quick to identify feminism online, but were reluctant to articulate exactly what the role of the internet and other digital technologies was” (55-56). Zimmerman further explains that feminist activism via social media also incorporates offline discussions surrounding hashtag movements such as #solidarityisforwhitewomen, #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter and #BringBackOurGirls. She emphasises that intersectional discussions such as “race, representations, difference and privilege” (64) found in social media are expressed outside of social media. In addition, Looft (2017) observes that, “the fourth wave, dated from 2008 onwards, works with the understanding that intersectionality is the common thread between the different communities and groups that link under the term ‘feminism’. As noted, a distinctive trait of the fourth wave movement is its reliance on and usage of

technology and social media to connect and reach populations across cultural and national borders” (894).

Hashtag feminism offers “a social environment where victims of injustice will coexist in an atmosphere that acknowledges their suffering, story and alienation” (Dixon, 2014:34). Khoja-Moolji (2015) claims that it was the shift to hashtag feminism that helped the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls achieve worldwide popularity. The campaign established greater goals through hashtag feminism and came to embody not just the Chibok students but also the women who live under regimes that "promote abuse and refuse girls formal education" (Chiluwa and Ifukor, 2015: 268).

Media Analysis of the #BringBackOurGirls Campaign

According to Ilevbare (2016), the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls went viral, sparking global awareness of the 270 schoolgirls abducted in the predominantly Christian community of Chibok, a small village on the outskirts of Borno State. Originally used on Twitter by Ibrahim Abdullahi in his April 23rd tweet, the hashtag began to spread. Abdullahi obtained the phrase from former Nigerian Minister of Education and World Bank Vice-President, Oby Ezekwesilli during her speech to a group of protesters, demanding the Nigerian government “bring back our girls” (Chiluwa and Ifukor, 2015). American celebrities such as George Clooney, Angelina Jolie, Michele Obama, who was then the First Lady, and Hilary Clinton, the then Secretary of State, also promoted the hashtag through their various platforms. “The hashtag sparked cyber-activism that brought international attention to the abduction issue, and to Boko Haram. #BringBackOurGirls has become a rallying point for abducted women, with famous actors and the hashtag of political figures” (268).

Carter Olson states that the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls is considered to have brought mainstream media coverage of the subject, effectively “guiding the attention of the mass media and mobilizing public discussion” about the abduction (2016: 12). Taylor (2014) on behalf of the *Washington Post* reported that “the trend has now grown into a genuinely global movement in social media” (para 2). Due to global media coverage, “the plight of the abducted students and the insurgency of Boko Haram was now influential on the international political scene, and the government of Nigeria will no longer stand idle” (Carter Olson, 2016: 773). According to Khola-Moolji (2015), while the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls alerted the international community to the Chibok students' plight, a conversation on women's rights was also sparked. According to him, the abducted students came to symbolize women's problems around the world, and the hashtag saw the abduction develop into a “broader discourse regarding the education and rights of girls in the global South” (348). Carter Olson (2016) describes the political impact of the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls by alleging that the hashtag played a part in the then Nigerian President, Goodluck Jonathan, losing his bid for re-election in 2015.

Currently the hashtag has been used in nearly twenty-four thousand (24,000) tweets on Twitter, two hundred and eighty-six thousand (286,000) posts on Instagram, and two hundred and twenty-three thousand (223,000) likes on Facebook. This data is available from each of these social media platforms by typing #BringBackOurGirls' in the search bar. In their work on the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls social media campaign, Chilwa and Ifukor (2015) analyse the “role of affective stance in the evaluation of social actors in the campaign discourse” (1). Although not specifying the use of third-world feminism in their analysis, Chilwa and Ifukor, both Nigerian academics, extracted themes from social media discussions of #BringBackOurGirls.

These themes revealed frustrations by Nigerians with the Nigerian government. Their analysis also revealed “slacktivism” embedded in tweets by people from the global north: “Emotional ideological evaluations of social actors and situations alone may achieve practically nothing, leaving the main problems of insecurity unsolved. In other words, they may end up as mere *slacktivism*” (3). According to Lee and Hsieh (2013), “slacktivism, that is *slacker and activism*, is the low-risk, low-cost activity via social media whose purpose is to raise awareness or grant some emotional satisfaction to the persons engaged in the activity” (5).

According to Njoroge (2016), “the Bring Back Our Girls campaign was an online sensation, attracting global attention that garnered more than one million tweets and posts” (2). She further states that it was at first a local campaign which aimed to expand globally and, as parents protested in the Nigerian capital, Abuja, similar protests were taking place in Washington DC, Los Angeles, London, and other cities across Europe and North America. From the perspective of transnationalism, Njoroge (2016) indicates that the #BBOG campaign represents the experiences of girls all over the world whose education and dreams have been thwarted by ideologies and cultures whose doctrines intimidate women and strip them of their purpose and existence. According to Njoroge, the campaign also exposed threats to girls’ education in Nigeria to the criticisms of the international community. I believe that the #BringBackOurGirls campaign portrays how the Nigerian context surrounding the kidnapping intersects with the global context, where women globally are faced with oppression due to their gender, sexuality, race, religion, low economic status and other elements of identity.

Analysing four Facebook posts on the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls, Njoroge (2016) highlights four discourses surrounding the campaign: education, human

trafficking, religious oppression, and women's power. In relation to the first:

“Education as a Tool for Girls’ Empowerment—Nothing can terrify a guerilla like a little girl with a textbook!”, Njoroge (2016) explains that education of the girl child had been one of the recurring themes on social media surrounding the kidnapping of the Chibok girls. In addition, online activists often attach the empowerment of girls to education, where education is seen as serving as a social equalizer and as creating a platform for girls to keep fighting for their rights. Njoroge (2016), however, concludes that “education does not always translate to the advancement of women” (321).

The second quote Njoroge (2016) discusses is: “Human Trafficking a Threat to Girls Empowerment – ‘human trafficking! please sign petitions!’” Posts such as this one emphasises the crime of human trafficking. Boko Haram, while taking responsibility for the kidnapping, announced that the girls would be sold as slaves and wives and taken across the Nigerian border. According to Njoroge, important as this discourse is, it “fails to interrogate the specific conditions in northern Nigeria” that have created a platform for the Boko Haram insurgencies (321).

The third quote: “Religious Oppression Holding Women Back - Freedom from ignorance and religious oppression... Bring back our girls!!!!,” is, according to Njoroge (2016), religious propaganda, which she argues has been a “key sub-theme in online interactions, posts and activism.” She clearly states that this post represents the reality of the historical oppression of women in Nigeria as linked to tradition, culture and religion. In this case, Boko Haram declared that they were engaged in a Jihad with the Nigerian government, and that Allah had ordered them to abduct the Chibok girls. They also forced some of the Christian girls to convert to Islam. I would however, like to add that Muslims globally have condemned the actions of Boko

Haram and emphasised that their extreme ideologies are not Islamic. The Associated Press (2018) reported that “the Islamic Fiqh Academy, which is based in Saudi Arabia and dedicated to the advanced study of Islam, said that this crime and other crimes committed by the likes of these extremist organizations contradicts all humanitarian principles and moral values and violates the provisions of the Quran and ‘Sunnah,’ or teachings of the Prophet Muhammad” (para. 3).

The final quote Njoroge analyses is: “Women’s Power - Women’s kick ass army!!!” According to Njoroge (2016), “women’s strength is constructed to emanate from bonds they share, and the value accorded to the human person” (321). This post also portrays transnational feminism and global feminism as women stand together and agree on the brutal experiences of the Chibok girls.

Njoroge concludes that despite western feminists’ use of the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls, “their discussions fit more on the liberal inclusive side of the continuum than the progressive side” (322). According to the author, institutional and legal policy changes in creating space for women can only do so much. She emphasises that these discourses and the discussions surrounding them do not portray “the larger socio- political issues in northern Nigeria that the girls’ abduction is symptomatic of” (323). She adds that the patriarchal system led to the vulnerability of the girls “and also led to President Jonathan Goodluck’s failure to act with sufficient urgency to rescue the girls” (323).

In researching the media framing of the hashtag #BringBackourGirls, Ofori-Parku and Moscato (2018) focused on the Nigerian, UK and US media. Their results revealed that the Nigerian media gave the most “on-the-ground and locally contextualised perspectives” (2487). They explained that these frames revealed “national protests, tensions between protesters and the police; and responses from the

Nigerian government” (2487). Citing Akinboade (2014), Ofori-Parku and Moscato (2018) portray how *The Vanguard* reported the arrest of #BringBackOurGirls campaign activist, Obiageli Ezekwesili: “A leader of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign group and former Minister of Education, Mrs. Obiageli Ezekwesili, was on July 21 briefly detained by security agents at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja, on her way to London” (para 1). This quote exposed the government-backed oppression Nigerian activists face. It also contrasted with the activists’ assertion that theirs were “peaceful protests in the face of government crack downs” (2487).

Ofori-Parku and Moscato further give an example quoted by Ezeobi (2014) on behalf of *This Day*, a Nigerian newspaper: “It is amazing how life can carry on as normal when hundreds of our daughters have been abducted and more have disappeared or [been] killed. I have no doubts that if children of our leaders and the super-rich were among [those captured], our governments would have negotiated and even paid heavy ransoms” (para 11). Analysing the quote, Ofori-Parku and Moscato (2014) expose the perspectives of Nigerians concerning the indifference of the Nigerian government to the rescue of the Chibok girls. They also observe that the efforts of the Nigerian government were not in place until the coverage of the international media began.

According to Ofori-Parku and Moscato (2018), the UK media frames the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls through the historical relationship between Nigeria as a former colony of the British empire, and the British government. It also reflects the understanding of Nigeria as an emerging economic power in Africa. Ofori-Parku and Moscato further explain that the UK *Sunday Times* observed that Nigeria had recently overtaken South Africa as the largest African economy. In a case of poor timing,

“Nigeria hosted the World Economic Forum in early May, with the hope of showcasing its achievements and providing a forum for discussing Africa’s positive growth story” (2490). International attention was however diverted to the kidnapping.

The US media coverage of the hashtag on the other hand focused on the “U.S. foreign policy, military might, war on terror, celebrity culture, and online activism” (Ofori-Parku and Moscato, 2018: 2490). *The Washington Post*, for example, discussed the position of the US government on the war against terror and suggests the online trend of anti- jihadism. In a *Washington Post* report, Krauthammer (2014) asks whether the use of the hashtag by celebrities such as Salma Hayek or then first lady, Michele Obama, was an “exercise in moral narcissism, that is slacktivism or a worthy new way of standing up to bad guys?” (para 1). “*The New York Times* coverage also described female education as “extremists ‘worst nightmare’ because of its ability to empower” (Ofori-Parku and Moscato, 2018: 2492).

In analysing the differences in the media coverage of the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls campaign by the Nigerian, US and UK press, Ofori-Parku and Moscato (2018) explain that the Nigerian media portrayed the campaign as an off-shoot of street protests in Nigeria, thereby revealing the realities of the campaign which were not covered by international mainstream media, such as experiences of Nigerian protesters. On the other hand, the UK and US media “focused less on the on-the-ground activities and more on the broader effects on the position of western countries on the fight against terrorism” (2494). Ofori-Parku and Moscato conclude by stating that “the BBOG activist hashtag, apart from providing an on-the-ground perspective on what was happening in Nigeria, also served a journalistic role for a broad audience, a publicity role for activists, and a way to gain the attention of power elites” (2495).

Maxfield (2016) observes that Twitter users in the global north “adopted and abandoned the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls with equal readiness, and both this support and its eventual expiration depended on the centering of imperial narratives about the global south” (895). When the campaign failed to bring results, supporters in the global north moved on to new causes such as the Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) ice bucket challenge. In addition to this, Maxfield (2016) explains that the commitments of these supporters could not be sustained because they were offered a simple story and their supports could not bring about a simple solution. As a matter of fact, to the global north, the kidnapped Chibok girls are “symbols of a contemporary recreation of an old picture—the poor African, the oppressed woman of color. The correct response to the symbol, according to colonial and imperial practice, was pity and military intervention” (896). In the western interpretation of the hashtag, women in the global south were portrayed as “perpetual offenders who lose authority and subject rights” (897), depicted as needing to be submissive to “dangerous, aggressive African men” after enduring violence (897). Such narratives reflect the point put forward by Chilwa and Ifukor (2015), who state that “many in the West believe they have a duty to protect vulnerable women and girls from abuse and injustice” (283), thereby exhibiting what Cole (2012) calls the “white saviour industrial complex” or implementing what Khoja-Moolji (2015) describes as a “liberal feminist salvation story” (348).

These insights show the importance of the perspective of third-world feminism and women-of-colour feminists. Loken (2014) analyses the hashtag by breaking down the words within it, focusing on the word “our”. According to him, positioning the abducted girls in this way “contradicts the hashtag’s feminist aims, because it promotes the idea that women are important simply because of their ability to be

property of another” (1100). He argues that the positioning of the Chibok girls as ‘our children’ enabled the west to ignore the on-the-ground lived experiences of women in third world countries.

While the campaign brought to the fore social media’s ability and potential to act as a global public sphere (Silverstone, 2006), it has also brought into question the ability of social media to transmit a message that is understood, interpreted and represented in the same way by a global audience. While the hashtag and accompanying photos have no doubt forced the issue onto the global agenda (Collins, 2014), it is questionable as to whether this human suffering, as represented by both social and mainstream media is, in fact, an accurate depiction of reality or simply a social construction of the ‘other’s suffering.’ Although Silverstone and Collins express skepticism concerning the effectiveness of both social media and mainstream media on the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls campaign, analysing the hashtag with a third world feminist perspective gives information and knowledge based on lived experiences. This is because experiences of third world women in third world countries, revealed by third world women, creates a level of authenticity. I believe that third world feminism, which will be discussed in the next chapter, helps critique the exaggerated photos which portray the ‘other’s suffering’ as Collins described. It also creates a platform that reveals valid experiences in the case of the #BringBackOurGirls, the oppressions the girls faced while in captivity, the anguish of parents of the unfound girls, and the police brutality some protesters in Nigeria faced while campaigning. In the case of the larger Nigerian socio-political-cultural context, the application of third world feminism, exposes the insecurities and potential harm that other girl-children and women are likely to face.

Chapter Three: Theory and Methodology

Theoretical Framework

Third world Feminism

My research will be guided by the theory of third world feminism due to the fact that the kidnapping of the Chibok girls occurred in Nigeria, and that the girls also had low socio-economic backgrounds. Through the lens of third world feminism, I will discuss traces of western feminism and transnational feminism found in tweets by people from North America/Europe and people of African descent from the global north and the global south. For the purpose of this research, I am guided by Mohanty's use of the term 'western feminism' as referring to dominant ideologies about women's issues originating from white feminists in the western world. Mohanty's work, *Under Western Eyes* (1984), focuses on the production of the "third world woman as a singular monolithic subject in western feminist texts" (52). According to her, "privilege and inadequate self-consciousness about the effect of western scholarship on the third world" exposes the extent of influence western feminist works have on third world women (53).

In articulating what third world feminism is, Mohanty (1991) states that this school of thought involves the "deconstruction, dismantling and internal critique of hegemonic western feminisms; and the building of feminist concerns grounded in

history, culture and geography” (52). In other words, contesting and re-contesting the viewpoints of people from the global north on those they have regarded as ‘third-world women’ and issues that concern them. McEwan (2001) explains that third world feminism objects to the notion that depicts “men as the primary source of oppression. This is because for black women globally, there is no single source of oppression; gender oppression is inextricably bound up with ‘race’ and class” (98). McEwan further explains that economic exploitation, political oppressions and access to basic social services such as clean water are essentially needed by poor women in third world countries, in addition to the more general issues such as gender oppression and sexual politics that women in the global north focus on. In the same light, Herr (2014) observes that “most second-wave white feminisms in the west, that is, liberal, radical, psycho-analytic, or ‘care-focused’ feminisms have assumed that women everywhere face similar oppression merely by virtue of their sex or gender” (4).

According to Herr (2014), Mohanty’s critique of white western feminism birthed “two constitutive ideas, among others, of third world feminism that adequately theorize about and address third World women’s oppression” (5). The first constitutive idea is that third world feminists must thoroughly examine the oppressions and resistance that third world women face by focusing on the “intersections of gender, race, class, ethnicity” in their locality (5). Herr (2014) explains that third world women’s resistance often does not enact a “demand for gender equality or radical social restructuring in order to achieve feminist goals,” rather, third world women’s resistance prefers changes that result from a communal collaboration with the men in their societies to improve standards of living in the home and the community (5). Herr further states that third world women’s activist groups usually have political affiliations with “nationalism and human rights

movements”; however, they address issues of gender inequality, “even if it was not their initial objective” (Basu, 1995:19 cited in Herr, 2014:6).

The second constitutive idea is that “third world feminists must recognize the historical and political agency of third world women and must therefore respect their diverse viewpoints” (Herr, 2014:6). Since the goal of third world women activism is to “enact positive changes” in their communities, their perspectives must be respected as they have the knowledge concerning “the events and conditions that affect their lives” (6). With these constitutive ideas extracted from Mohanty’s critique of white western feminism, Herr stipulates third world feminism as a:

...feminist perspective on third world women that produces more reliable analyses of and recommendations for addressing third World women’s multidimensional and complex oppression through careful examinations of their local conditions in their historical specificity; and respect the agency and voices of third World women engaged in diverse forms of local activism (6).

In Johnson-Odim’s words, “separating away from first world feminist organisations is a choice of third world women who know that a gender-based analysis alone, without the factoring in of issues of race and class, can never describe their oppression” (1991: 318). Johnson-Odim explains that problems such as nutrition, infant mortality, health-care delivery and skill training are of central importance to many third world women, especially from low-economic social status. She further states that raising these problems within first world feminist movements “requires taking an antiimperialist position, identifying and fighting against the structural elements” of what western feminists have defined as feminism (318).

Western feminist movement also used interchangeably in this research as white feminism inadequately addresses issues that concern women of colour such as

race; and of third world countries such as culture, economic status and historical agencies. This serves as a limitation to western feminism, as it assumes that all women experience the same level of oppressions. Findings in this study, which is further discussed in the Analysis chapter, will show that solutions such as education to the kidnapping of the Chibok girls was mostly offered by people from the global north. Using the lens of third world feminism and positioning myself as a female Nigerian, I examine traces of western feminism in the analysed #BringBackOurGirls tweets from the North American/European twitter to discuss existing grand narratives and solutions that western feminism offers to third world women. When selecting tweets to analyse, the biographies of people who tweet are often displayed. This is how I am able to know, at least to some extent, the race of the users and origin of selected tweets. I also explore the role transnational feminism played in the popularity of the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls. I observed elements of transnational feminism among tweets from people in countries such as South Africa and among people of African descent based in the global north. As stated by Lindio-McGovern and Wallimann (2009), transnational feminism can be a potential ‘force for resistance and creating change for global social justice’ (8). Transnational feminism works to build connectivity between women across nation borders through their individual experiences. Rather than focusing on the goal of global sisterhood, transnational feminism recognises individualism and the specificity of oppressions faced by women. An example is the kidnapping of the Chibok girls and the shooting of Malala Yousafzai in Pakistan.

Method and Methodology

Feminist Content Analysis

According to Rudy et al (2010), content analysis is a research approach in which specific themes are systematically identified and categorised “with the purpose of making inferences about the contexts, causes, and effects” of these themes (705). In their words, “content analysis is a research methodology in which specific message characteristics are systematically and objectively identified, with the purpose of making inferences about the contexts, causes, and effects of these messages” (705). In other words, the aim of content analysis is to relate identified themes to the larger “socio-cultural-political-economic context” (Leavy, 2000:705) of what is being observed.

The primary mode of analysis for my research is feminist content analysis, derived from the fundamentals of content analysis which was conceived by Harriet Martineau. Harriet Martineau, a 19th century sociologist, explains in her book *How to Observe Morals and Manners* (1838) that her approach to understanding social structures is through the study of things or cultural products. According to her, the observer needs to be aware that people’s behaviours and viewpoints on any issue are dependent on the existing societal structures and rules. In her words, “every prevalent virtue or vice is the result of the particular circumstances amidst which the society exists” (27). In my research, using a feminist content analysis will further probe global viewpoints on the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls. It will also examine the roots of these viewpoints.

Using content analysis, I will be applying a feminist lens in analysing themes derived from twitter data. Leavy (2006) explains that “within the expansive landscape of content analysis, feminist research plays a critical role on the interrogation and understanding of the cultural world” (245). Applying a feminist lens, “which is the

core of the work” involves deducing messages about gender, power and oppression (245). Leavy further states that

...by bringing a feminist lens and feminist concerns such as women’s status, equality, and social justice to the study of material culture (products) and symbolic culture (multimedial images and representations), feminist researchers employ content analysis in very unique ways and ask questions that would otherwise go unexplored. Furthermore, as culture is a site where ideas are created, disseminated, and consumed (often including extreme and stereotypical imagery), feminists have a particular stake in unraveling the texts and products that become an integral component of social structures (225).

According to Reinharz and Kulick, (2007), feminist content analysis seeks to examine direct and indirect political messages of the analysed content. They state that “despite the varying contexts in media, feminist content analysis retains a basic approach of examining the underlying political message of this content, even if the producers attempt to conceal or are unaware of these aspects” (271). For example, Barrett et al (2016) use content analysis in their study “to examine the visibility of feminist identity and constructs in guiding the work of state domestic violence coalitions in the United States” (361). They placed their focus on analysing the language that organizations used in describing their work to the public via their agency websites. With their research questions in view, they initially reviewed the content of fifty-one websites, out of which they noted consistent themes and ‘selected specific sections of text for analysis’ through manual coding (362). The analysis of these themes was also informed by the literature reviewed. This literature was in the area of the operation of feminist organisations and feminist approaches to intimate

partner violence. According to Barret et al (2016), the integration of concepts derived from the literature, with consistent themes from the data analysis birthed their results. These results were feminist issues such as gender constructs, power, identity and systemic structures which informed the role of feminist organisation in domestic violence. In conducting feminist analysis, I also find it important to analyse content produced by self-identified feminists. As Reinharz and Kulick (2007) state, “content generated by feminists needs to be analysed through a cross-cultural and social lens that reveals issues of both oppression and liberation” (271).

Schlenker et al (1998) conducted a feminist content analysis of *Seventeen* magazines published in 1945, 1955, 1965, 1975, 1985 and 1995 to “determine if the articles had changed in response to the feminist movements from the 1940s to the mid 1990s” (139). This research was also an extension of a content analysis by Peirce (1990) of *Seventeen* magazines published in 1961, 1972 and 1985. Schlenker et al (1998) analysed all 12 issues to determine year to year consistencies and differences embedded within the articles in the magazine. These consistencies and differences were then categorised into themes for analysis and discussions.

Using “critical discourse analysis and appraisal framework,” the findings from Chilwa and Ifukor previously detailed in my Literature Review chapter, revealed that most of the tweets from the global north were generic empathies which analysed the kidnapping of the Chibok girls with uninformed information (1). In explaining their methodology, Chilwa and Ifukor (2015) stated that:

Our data is derived from a corpus of 2,500 tweets and 2,500 Facebook posts comprising 24,983 words. A keyword analysis of the corpus was carried out using *Wordsmith* to determine the key lexical components of the corpus; especially key lexical items that express evaluation and affective stance. In

compiling the keywords, the *Nairaland* corpus (compiled from the *Cyber-creole* project of the University of the Freiburg) was used as reference corpus. We examined the linguistic contexts within which key (evaluative) words occurred. Since it was difficult to draw examples of affect and judgement expressed in the data electronically following our method of analysis, we utilized only a qualitative method by analyzing samples from the raw data (8). They used mixed methods in their analysis of the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls. They also considered discourse methodology appropriate to their study because “tweets’ on Twitter and ‘posts’ on Facebook as ‘discourses’ are samples of actual language use in practical communication, not only in the micro context of computer-mediated communication (CMC), but also in the macro context of Nigeria and the participating members of the global community” (8).

In examining the application of feminist content analysis, Leavy (2006) details three types of feminist content analysis: Feminist Textual Analysis, Feminist Visual Content Analysis, and Feminist Audio-Visual Content Analysis. Of these types of feminist content analysis, my study uses the feminist textual analysis.

Feminist Textual Analysis

Leavy describes feminist textual analysis as an approach used to analyze data in written texts through a feminist lens; it is used to explore issues central to the lived experiences of women. “Furthermore, this kind of research often looks at text from the viewpoint of women who may not otherwise be considered” (236). In my study, this type of analysis is used with the data derived from written tweets from the Nigerian and North American/European twitter. Analysis from this data is also discussed with information derived from headlines on mainstream media online

publications such as the American *Washington Post*, British *The Guardian* and Nigerian *This Day*.

According to Hesse-Biber (2010), “research becomes feminist when a feminist theoretical perspective” is applied (172). She further explains that applying a feminist theoretical perspective places gender at the core and intersects it with race, ethnicity, identity and economic status. Applying a third-world feminist lens will also enable me as a Nigerian to analyse tweets from the Nigerian twitter, as I expect to come across issues that were not addressed by international media houses, for instance, the police brutality against peaceful #BringBackOurGirls campaigns. As previously mentioned, I expect to find what I will term ‘deeper’ and local contexts from the Nigerian twitter that give more clarity to the on-the-ground experiences in Nigeria.

In conducting feminist content analysis to research, I find the works of Patricia Leavy relevant to my study. For Leavy (2006) “content analysis offers feminist researchers a flexible and wide-reaching method for engaging in this intellectual and political process. As culture is extremely far-reaching” (225). There is no specific structure on the application of feminist content analysis “as it is not possible to cover all the ways that feminists can unobtrusively study culture” (225). However, she offers basic guidelines that can create a path of content analysis for feminist research. Leavy (2006) emphasises that in feminist research, it is important for the researcher to be guided by research questions surrounding gender, race, ethnic representations and stereotypes in the text, language used and the producers of these texts.

In my study, the first research question is concerned about how Nigerians, both on social media and mainstream media, discuss the hashtag, considering the fact that they have more on-the-ground or local insight on the kidnapping. It also exposes the wider Nigerian socio-cultural and political implications. The second research question

on the other hand is concerned about the type of language used, knowledge and solutions offered by people from the global north on twitter and the mainstream media. This research question also seeks to know how the third-world woman is perceived.

Leavy and Harris (2008) explain that feminist content analysis involves a stage called initial immersion, which involves “determining the units of analysis, coding and interpretation” (180). The unit of analysis is regarded as the lump of data to be observed and analysed through a type of coding, either manually or computerised. They also emphasise that regardless of the types of coding applied, the judgement of the researcher is instrumental to the underlying meanings of the data. Leavy (2006) conceives that in order to conduct feminist content analysis, the “researcher does not create raw data from surveys or interviews but rather collects pre-existing data such as newspapers, books, pictures, television programs and so forth” (227). She further states that the authenticity of the data is dependent on its pre-existing, natural and non-interactive nature. The naturalistic and non-interactive character of the data enables an unobtrusive approach to the research. “Researchers do not intrude into social life by observing, surveying, or interviewing, but rather examine existing noninteractive texts, which classifies the research process as “unobtrusive” (229). I used this unobtrusive research method to examine the tweets published within the first three months after the kidnapping, that is, April to July 2014, rather than interviews and direct interaction with participants and raw data.

The process of conducting a feminist content analysis involves not only “analysing the content but also the assumptions of the producers and readers” (Reinharz and Kulick, 2007: 259). Reinharz and Kulick (2007) describe four types of cultural materials that dominate as objects of feminist study: written records, visual

texts, material culture, and behavioural residues. According to the authors: “written records can be in the form of diaries, scientific journals and graffiti; visual texts can be in the form of television shows and advertisements; while material culture can be in the form of music technology and ownership of books” (259).

With the advent of social media, the scope of feminist content analysis has widened. Over the years various feminist research has been conducted on social media platforms such as twitter, Facebook, to analyze gender representations, and power relations in contemporary times. According to Ungbha and Kneese (2015), social media is a strategy which feminists can use to contest and recontest “political, economic, social, and cultural arenas” (707). They add that “feminist scholarship in recent times demonstrate the ways that online interactions over particular social media platforms coincide with existing inequalities and hierarchies situated in specific communities” (707). As a tool for research, social media has been used to explore issues surrounding social problems such as sexual assault, racism and objectification of women in motion pictures (Li et al, 2020). Using tweets as their unit of analysis, Li et al (2020) studied how twitter users described their experiences of sexual assault; and why they chose not to reveal their experiences. Using thematic analyses to analyse tweets associated with the hashtags #Metoo and #WhyIDidntReport, this research revealed that social media users who were victimised “engaged in hashtag activism through discussing views on political and social issues; sharing resources to help sexual assault victims and encourage protests” (1).

Analysing the same case study as I examine in this thesis, #BringBackOurGirls, Njoroge (2016) explores global activism of social media campaigns. Using thematic textual analysis, Njoroge extracted four main themes from comments which related to feminist concerns on Facebook discussing the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls. These

themes were “education for girls, condemnation of human trafficking, religious oppression and women power,” which are also concerns of third-world feminism. Her findings concluded that the #BringBackOurGirls “campaign brought into sharp relief the real everyday struggles women in northern Nigeria experience in an attempt to get an education. The global campaign however does not question traditional gender roles and cultural patriarchy in Nigeria” (323). Through the lens of a third world feminism, I expect to find and highlight comments that portray generic empathy, solutions and indifference from the North American/European twitter. During the initial immersion stage, I was able to deduct themes such as lack of empathy, girls’ access to education and human rights.

The Application of Content Analysis in the Study

Explaining the process of designing content analysis for research, Leavy and Harris (2008) highlight the sampling strategies that can be used for data analysis. They state that the purposeful sampling strategy should be employed while analysing data. Probability sampling, on the other hand, involves the random selection of data to achieve a form of generalisation or representativeness.

For the purpose of my research and the guidance of my research questions, I seek to employ purposeful sampling strategies (Laerd, 2012) to analyse data obtained from twitter. According to Laerd (2012), the main aim of purposeful sampling strategy is to concentrate on specific themes based on the judgement of the researcher that would answer the research questions. Laerd further states that “purposive sampling relies on the judgement of the researcher when it comes to selecting the units (e.g., people, cases/organisations, events, pieces of data) that are to be studied” (2). The type of purposeful sampling strategy I intend to use is Maximum Variation Sampling. Laerd (2012) describes Maximum Variation Sampling as:

...heterogeneous sampling is a purposive sampling technique used to capture a wide range of perspectives relating to the thing that you are interested in studying; that is, ranging from those conditions that are viewed to be typical through to those that are more extreme in nature. By conditions, we mean the units (i.e., people, cases/organisations, events, pieces of data) that are of interest to the researcher. These units may exhibit a wide range of attributes, behaviours, experiences, incidents, qualities, situations, and so forth. The basic principle behind maximum variation sampling is to gain greater insights into a phenomenon by looking at it from all angles. This can often help the researcher to identify common themes that are evident across the sample (2).

Analysing the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls through the perspective of third world feminism will also shed light on how other perspectives such as western feminism and transnational feminism play a role in the adoption of the hashtag. These perspectives reveal themes embedded in twitter from Nigerians and non-Nigerians.

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) break down content analysis as a qualitative research technique with three approaches that can be used to extract and interpret meaning from data. According to them, these approaches are conventional, directed and summative. "In conventional content analysis, coding categories are derived directly from the text data. With a directed approach, analysis starts with a theory or relevant research findings as guidance for initial codes. A summative content analysis involves counting and comparisons, usually of keywords or content, followed by the interpretation of the underlying context" (1277). In my research, the conventional approach was used initially as I manually scrolled through twitter and read all 700 tweets which were posted between April and July 2014. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) state that:

...data analysis starts with reading all data repeatedly to achieve immersion and obtain a sense of the whole as one would read a novel. Then, data are read word by word to derive codes by first highlighting the exact words from the text that appear to capture key thoughts or concepts. Next, the researcher approaches the text by making notes of his or her first impressions, thoughts, and initial analysis. As this process continues, labels for codes emerge that are reflective of more than one key thought. These often come directly from the text and then become the initial coding scheme (1279).

In this research, I chose the three-months between April and July 2014 because the timeline included the initial use of the hashtag, the momentum the hashtag eventually gathered and its decline of its popularity. Reading these tweets allowed me to understand the discussions those tweeting the hashtag were engaging in, and their understanding of the kidnapping and rescue of the Chibok girls. While reading, I highlighted key texts and recurring comments from the Nigerian twitter and the North American/European twitter. These recurring comments were then grouped into preliminary codes or categories, which I will discuss in my data collection section. In the second approach, the directed content analysis, Hsieh and Shannon (2005) explain that a pre-existing theory plays a central role in data analysis. They further state that “the goal of a directed approach to content analysis is to validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or theory. Existing theory or research can help focus the research question. It can provide predictions about the variables of interest or about the relationships among variables, thus helping to determine the initial coding scheme or relationships between codes” (1281). In my research, I directed the lens of third world feminism into analysing tweets from both the Nigerian and North American/European twitter. Herr (2014) states that “in generating descriptively

reliable feminist analyses by third World women themselves of third World women's diverse forms of oppression and focusing on third world women's activism in their particular *local/national* contexts", the perspective of third-world feminism in content analysis critiques the grand narratives and solutions suggested by western feminism in western media (2).

The summative approach to content analysis, according to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), "typically starts with identifying and quantifying certain words or content in text with the purpose of understanding the contextual use of the words or content" (1283). In my study, 700 tweets with the key word #BringBackOurGirls between April and July 2014 were posted. Out of these 700 tweets, 113 tweets were analysed and sub-grouped into categories and themes. These 113 tweets comprised of 45 Nigerian tweets and 68 North American/European tweets.

As previously mentioned, I wanted to analyse the different recurring themes and underlying meanings that are embedded within tweets from Nigeria and the global north. I employed the use of inductive approach into coding the analysed data derived from twitter. According to Leavy (2006) "inductive approaches to coding, allows the researcher to develop code categories directly out of the data during the coding and analysis process" (244). In other words, the categories actually emerged as I sifted through the data. This approach allowed me to use the language of text itself and help interpretations emerge from these texts.

Data Criteria and Collection

As an "online microblogging tool, Twitter broadcasts more than 400 million messages per day: (Kim et al, 2013:140). The hashtag #BringBackOurGirls has presently birthed about 24,000 tweets. As a result of this large number of tweets, I

focused on tweets that emerged within the time frame of the first three months of the kidnapping, April 23 to July 31, 2014. As previously mentioned, an average of about 700 tweets were broadcast within this time frame. This number of tweets indicates that conversations on #BringBackOurGirls continued after July 31, 2014. However, the first three months witnessed the start and a decline of the popularity of the tweets. I initially read and scrolled through the twitter feeds with the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls in order to understand and note the type of conversations and perspectives surrounding the kidnapping and rescue of the Chibok girl. This is the immersion stage previously described.

Through manually coding the content, I narrowed the unit of analysis selection to tweets from twitter accounts of public figures. This helped to locate the nationality, gender and in some cases race of the account holders. These popular public figures ranged from politicians and activists to actors and entertainers from Nigerian and the North American/European twitter spheres. Within initially noted themes were some which were more inconsistent than others. I focused on the consistent themes, which also proved relevant to my literature review, research questions and revealed feminist centered issues such as gender oppressions, imperial narratives and power relations. These consistent themes were split into two categories: Nigerian Twitter and North American/European Twitter. Within the consistent themes found on Nigerian twitter were: plea for the Nigerian government to find the girls, police brutality against #BringBackOurGirls protesters in Nigeria, insecurity, religious oppressions, focus on the upcoming World Economic Forum in Abuja, Nigeria, focus on the on-going gubernatorial elections in Ekiti state, Nigeria, more insurgencies by Boko Haram, reactions against the expensive public relations by the Nigerian government, and #BringBackOurGirls became less popular (global silence). Within the consistent

themes found on North American/European twitter were: plea for the intervention of international law, child trafficking, girls' right to education, and lack of empathy.

These themes shall be further discussed in the *Analysis* chapter.

Nigerian, US and UK newspaper sources

In order to explore more fully the discourses revealed in the Nigerian media and the international media, I also explored the link between twitter and the mainstream news media. The mainstream media I consulted were: *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, *CNN* and *Channels Television*. Headlines from these sources were used to expand my focus to the broader discussions surrounding the themes extracted from the 113 analysed tweets. *The Washington Post* and *CNN* were two American news sources which consistently reported on the kidnapping and the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls, while *The Guardian* was United Kingdom's most consistent source for information. *Channels Television* on the other hand, was the most popular media source from Nigeria, reporting the local and on-the-ground information concerning the kidnapping, rescue efforts and the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls. Combining a discussion of the Twitter themes and new media headlines created a platform for discussions of the wider Nigerian socio-economic-political context. It further reveals the type of discourses used by international media in framing the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls.

Chapter four: Data Analysis

The analysis of the hashtag #BringBringBackOurGirls through a feminist lens reveals some of the underlying local Nigerian socio-political and cultural issues surrounding the kidnapping of the Chibok girls. It also ultimately shows the grand narratives behind the opinions of non-Nigerians on the issue of the kidnapping. Reading through tweets from Nigerian twitter revealed issues such as the role of cultural patriarchy, lack of priority of the girl-child, and low economic status. The hashtag #BringBackOurGirls campaign, both online and offline, represented and worked to reveal the experiences faced by underaged girls from low-income homes in Northern Nigeria. These lived oppressions range from child marriages, rape, poverty, to religious mandates (Afolayan, 2019). According to Njoroge (2016),

...the #BringBackOurGirls case represents the experiences of girls and women around the world whose educational endeavours are terminated or curtailed by groups adhering to ideologies that are inimical to women's progress with discourses steeped in patriarchy supported by misapplied cultural and religious systems. The viral campaign lifted the lid on the perils of girls' education in Nigeria that had escaped widespread public scrutiny (312).

Through my content analysis, I observed that the recurring themes pulled from Nigerian-produced content included : pleas for the Nigerian government to rescue the girls, police brutality against protesters in Nigeria, the upcoming Ekiti state elections

and the World Economic Forum, Abuja 2014, more killings by Boko Haram, and the Nigerian government's expensive investment on public relations to change its image (government rebranding). By the month of June, Nigerian twitter began to show concern that the hashtag was no longer as popular as it had been in previous months.

During the same period, recurring themes extracted from North American/European twitter included: child trafficking, human rights, global white feminism, transnational feminism, solidarity, access to education and plea for the intervention of the International Security Council. Both Nigerian and North American/European twitter offered a focus on religion, child marriage, petitions and inadequate global coverage. As I will elaborate below, I also observed a level of lack of empathy and disbelief in some of the content from North American/European twitter. Positioning myself as a Nigerian, I observed that recurring themes embedded in the data from Nigerian twitter created a larger discussion on the Nigerian socio-political context of the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls which was absent in the themes from North American/European twitter. Below, I discuss these from the perspective of third-world feminism.

As previously mentioned, about 700 tweets were posted between April 23 and July 31, 2014. Out of these, 113 tweets were analysed and sub-grouped into categories and themes. The remaining 587 tweets were not included due to the issue of different languages, inappropriate words such as: curse words, content such as advertisements not found to be useful and less recurring content such as pictures and prayers. While scrolling through the 700 tweets, I observed that about 164 out of 587 unanalysed tweets were posted in non-English languages such as pidgin English which is the West African slang of English, Arabic, French, and the local Nigerian language. This made up about 26% of the uncategorised tweets. About 99 (17%) tweets contained

inappropriate curse words that seemed to be expressed in anger. These 99 tweets were not analysed as they did not fit into themes and thereby were not useful to the research. About 117 (20%) tweets, primarily found on Nigerian twitter, contained prayers not only for the safety of the girls, but also for the state of security in Nigeria. Tweets with only pictures and no caption except the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls made up about 19% of the uncategorised tweets, while about 17% were comprised of tweets with unrelated content such as advertisements and motivational captions. The 113 tweets analysed, and categorised tweets are comprised of 45 Nigerian tweets and 68 North American/European tweets.

Themes in the Nigerian Twitter

Commencing in April 23, 2014, with the first tweet by Ibrahim Abdullahi, a Nigerian lawyer, content within Nigerian tweets began with constant pleas for the Nigerian government and military to rescue the kidnapped Chibok girls (Chiluwa & Ifukor, 2015). The following are the themes and tweets identified in the data set.

Police brutality against protesters.

This theme was one Nigerians focused on while using the hashtag. It highlighted the experiences that protesters in Nigeria encountered at the hands of the Nigerian police. Out of the analysed 45 Nigerian tweets, about 7 tweets explained that the Nigerian police broke up peaceful demonstrations, detained demonstrators and released tear gas on them.

@letat_lechat (2014, May 4): Protesters in Lagos Defy Police Threat, March for Abducted Borno School Girls <http://allafrica.com/c/-5Ac0q> via @allafrica #BringBackOurGirls

@KathleenNdongomo (2014, May 1): We've been teargassed by @PoliceNG but we're going nowhere. #BringBackOurGirls.

These were tweeted by Nigerians who were detained by the police, while engaging in a peaceful march in Abuja, Nigeria. These tweets also provided real-time and on-the-ground experiences. At its inception, the #BringBackOurGirls marches led by activists with a large representation of families of the abducted girls, civil servants, traders and entrepreneurs focused on the missing 270 girls and the thousands of deaths and millions of displaced people due to the Boko Haram insurgency.

(Ologundudu, 2020). The #BringBackOurGirls campaign in Nigeria was considered as a form of opposition to the Nigerian government. According to Otas (2016), “the more BBOG became vociferous with its demand for the girls to be rescued, the more antagonistic the relationship between state and the advocacy group became. This led to their sit-ins and protest marches being disrupted by the police” (para. 6). According to Aina et al (2019), protesters marched and gathered at places such as Unity Fountain, a state park in Abuja, chanting and carrying placards with slogans such as: “where are my sisters?” and “bring back our sisters.” He further explained that the #BringBackOurGirls marches took a strong position against violence, making the protests across the country peaceful. However, detaining and beating protesters became a frequent occurrence by the Nigerian police. The leader of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign and other members of the movement were also arrested by Nigerian policemen (Richards, 2018).

The theme of police brutality against Nigerian protesters portrayed on-the-ground obstacles faced at street marches and other protest activities by demonstrators in Nigeria. Stories have cited numerous cases of #BringBackOurGirls demonstrators being muzzled or detained by public officials. The Nigerian *Vanguard* called the

protestors' conflict with police a 'Cold War.' According to Akinboade (2014), a section of the *Vanguard* stated: A leader of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign group and former Minister of Education, Mrs. Obiageli Ezekwesili, was on July 21 briefly detained by security agents at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja, on her way to London" (para 1). This explained the arguments of demonstrators, whose peaceful campaigns were met with threats from the Nigeria police. Rhodan (2014), in *Time Magazine*, reported that "Abuja Police Commissioner Joseph Mbu said the ongoing protests pose a security threat to citizens in the capital city" (para 2). In addition, the Commissioner stated that the protests were too soon, and dangerous elements will join the groups under the disguise of protest and detonate explosives aimed at embarrassing the government" (para 4). This statement by the Commissioner of police may seem logical; however, teargassing, beating and detaining the protesters was not necessary and it abused human rights and citizen rights. As stipulated by the section 40 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution: "Every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate with other persons, and in particular he may form or belong to any political party, trade union or any other association for the protection of his interests" (IV:59).

The human and citizens' rights abuse against protesters is not alien to the culture of policing in Nigeria. Police brutality against protesters has existed as far as back as colonial Nigeria, during the Aba women's riot of 1929 in Southwestern Nigeria. According to Falola (2011), the 1929 Aba women's riot started as an opposition against tax policies imposed by British colonial administrators on Igbo women in south-west Nigeria. Officers of the colonial government seized properties and imprisoned anyone who criticized them. As a result, the women organised themselves and marched to administrative centers, whilst chanting the for resignation

of warrant chiefs. The colonial police were called in and they fired at the women, killing about 51 women and wounding 50 more.

2015 Ekiti state elections and the World Economic Forum.

In Nigerian twitter, Nigerians frequently expressed their frustrations concerning the Nigerian government's focus on the upcoming 2015 Ekiti state elections and the Abuja World Economic Forum. About 19 tweets out of those analysed comprised complaints about the focus of the Nigerian government on the then upcoming World Economic Forum:

@omojuwa (2014, April 23): If only the government would show as much desperation & dedication to #BringBackOurGirls as it is showing to host #WEFAfrica.

@elDeeTheDon (2014, June 21): If the Chibok girls got half the attention & concern given to the Ekiti elections, they'd probably be home by now. #Day67 #BringBackOurGirls.

This tweet by popular Nigerian blogger, @omojuwa highlights the preparation for the upcoming World Economic Forum to be held in Abuja, May 7, 2014: 'In a case of poor timing, Nigeria hosted the World Economic Forum in early May with the hopes to showcase its economic achievements' (Ofori-Parku and Moscato, 2018: 2,490).

Nigerian entertainer, @elDeeTheDon's tweet illustrated the perception that Nigerians have concerning the priority the Nigerian government place on the rescue of the Chibok girls. According to Ruggedman, a Nigerian musician on twitter: "12,000 police officers, 25 sniffer dogs were employed for the June 21 elections, wouldn't these have helped to #BringBackOurGirls?".

In preparation for the upcoming World Economic Forum in Abuja, the Nigerian government ordered the closure of public offices and increased the level of security on

the streets of Abuja (Ugonna and Mohammed, 2014). According to a *BBC News* report on May 4, 2014, “President Goodluck Jonathan's government says 5,000 police and soldiers will be deployed for the WEF on Africa, which begins on Wednesday. The official reason for closing all schools and government offices in the capital is to ensure traffic flows smoothly” (para. 14,15). Nigerian twitter users complained that the Nigerian government focused more attention on preparing for the prestigious World Economic Forum, rather than deploying all necessary security operations to rescue the kidnapped Chibok girls. As reported by Murdock (2014), “analysts say the event highlights Nigeria's increasing duality: It is the biggest economy in Africa, but authorities cannot even keep children safe in their schools” (para 1). This theme reveals lack of urgency and indifference by the Nigerian government. According to Foroohar (May 7, 2014) in *Time Magazine*, “the general feeling among participants here at the WEF is that the lack of urgency around the issue represents the failure of government to provide the sort of basic security that is crucial to both African growth, and Western investment” (para 3). Foroohar continued by stating that: “The Nigerian leaders seem more interested in discussing foreign investment and privatization of the industries, rather than security and the missing girls” (*Time Magazine*, 2014: para 4). Although it is safe to say that a country’s economic growth and national security are interlinked, rescuing the Chibok girls and executing national security operations might have been another way to attract the confidence of foreign investors.

The priorities of the Nigerian government in rescuing the Chibok girls was also questioned when the government underwent a process of government rebranding, including an expensive investment in changing the image of the administration. According to a *BBC News* (2014) report, the Nigerian government invested 1.2 million USD to a US public relations firm, Levick, in order to portray a positive

public presentation of how the Nigerian government handled the kidnapping.

Nigerians reacted to this on social media and offline. For instance, former Minister of Education, Obiageli Ezekwesili, tweeted: “how can @LEVICK earn filthy income on the back of innocent women and men that have STOOD EVERYDAY for 78 DAYS DEMANDING: #BringBackOurGirls?” Dixon (2014) referencing a tweet posted by @Perseverance_ cites: “we don’t need some PR company from DC to tell us how our govt feels about us. we live here, you operate from DC @LEVICK enjoy your lunch fee” (para 8). These tweets not only expose a perceived lack of urgency on the part of the Nigerian government, but also the outrage over the use of media consultants from the global north in offering solutions without considering the local actors in Nigeria. Tolu Ogunlesi, a popular Nigerian columnist for *Punch Newspaper*, stated: “one seriously hopes these American narrative-shapers have some understanding of Nigeria beyond Wikipedia and government messaging. One also takes it for granted that they know that the people who actually have the power to shape the Nigerian narrative are the ones who employed them.” (in Dixon, 2014: para. 24).

These attitudes of indifference by the Nigerian government reiterates the idea that women are ‘second class citizens’ in Nigeria. According to Akpojivi (2019), “gender equality is still a major bane confronting the Nigerian state as deep rooted socio-cultural and colonial issues have continued to influence society’s views of who a woman is and her sense of being” (19). As the above discussion shows, women in Nigeria are denied socio-cultural and political benefits such as the confidence in an elected government to provide security and safety. I believe that lack of transparency, accountability and corruption of the Nigerian government is an act of violence against not only the kidnapped Chibok girls, but also women in Nigeria.

Trivialised experiences

While analysing data from June 2014, I observed that most tweets from Nigerian twitter were focused on the sudden silence surrounding the use of the hashtag. By the third month, there was a reduction in the use of the hashtag and Nigerian activists began to plead for its resurgence. They also began to question if the international community had ever placed priority on the kidnapping. Out of 45 tweets from Nigerian twitter, about 18 tweets (40%) consisted of tweets posted in June 2014 that highlighted that the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls was no longer trending, indicating that the world had moved on:

@JMakamba (2014, June 28): Abducted girls still missing in Nigeria, more were taken this week, hashtags are receding, the world has quietly moved on #BringBackOurGirls.

@kininisokoncepts (2014, June 17): few months ago, all over the social media was #bringbackourgirls so what has suddenly happened to that campaign

@JAAkies @bellanaija.

These tweets portray a growing concern on the part of Nigerians that the international community had moved on from the #BringBackOurGirls campaign. The perceptions embedded in these tweets is that the world outside of Nigeria had abandoned the #BringBackOurGirls movement. According to Maxfield (2016), “the White, Northern world adopted and abandoned “Bring Back Our Girls” with equal readiness, and both this support and its eventual expiration depended on the centring of imperial narratives about the Global South” (895). Maxfield continues by explaining that this could be as a result of the “heterogeneity of adoption on either side of the racial and national divides,” that is the Nigerian twitter and the Global North twitter (895).

During the stage of initial immersion, I observed that comments from North American/European Twitter were not focused on the larger context behind Boko

Haram's violence, rather they were focused on what seem to be the regular bane of third world countries, such as suppression of women and poverty. I find this trivialises the reality of the victims of the Chibok kidnapping. Consequently, the unwillingness to understand the deeply rooted cultural and political context surrounding the Chibok girls and girlhood in Nigeria at large, is one of the factors in the declining popularity of the hashtag.

Themes Found in North American/European Twitter

Tweets from the North American/European twitter emerged by April 25, 2014. However, they did not gain popularity until the beginning of May. I observed that the hashtag gradually gained momentum through the tweets of politicians, public figures, feminists and organisations. It was also interesting to note that most of these tweets were produced by American politicians such as State Representative of Texas, Gina Calanni, former California senator, Barbara Boxer, former US first lady, Michelle Obama, and former secretary of state, Hillary Clinton.

Girls' Rights and Access to Education

Within North American/European twitter, the theme of girls' rights and access to education was frequently deduced from the contents. About 35 tweets (51%) focused on access to education as the solution to issues of the girl child and women in third world countries:

@HillaryClinton (2014, May 4): Access to education is a basic right & an unconscionable reason to target innocent girls. We must stand up to terrorism. #BringBackOurGirls.

@RepWilson (2014, June 2): Girls have the right to live freely and pursue an education fearlessly. Join @RepWilson; tweet #BringBackOurGirls.

Tweets by Hillary Clinton and US member House of Representatives, Federica Wilson, and a sea of similar tweets show concern about access to education and girls' rights. I observed that most tweets from Europe and North America discussed access to education as a basic necessity for the girl child. Although Clinton was not the Secretary of State during the kidnapping of the Chibok girls, as the former Secretary of State, Clinton spoke on the kidnapping at the 2014 Philanthropy New York event. When asked about the kidnapping of the Chibok girls, Clinton said, "The Nigerian government has been derelict in its responsibility in protecting boys and girls, men and women in Northern Nigeria.... the Nigerian government must accept help, particularly intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance help. They can do a better job if they accept offers made" (CNN, 2014).

In a weekly address on May 10, 2014 former First Lady, Michele Obama, spoke for the second time against the kidnapping of the Chibok girls. In her address, she stated that "education is truly a girl's best chance for a bright future, not just for herself but for her family and her nation, and that's true here in the United States" (The White House: para. 21). While researching, I found this sentiment by the former First Lady the most consistent, especially in tweets posted by users in the North America/Europe. These tweets imply that its users perceive education as the only way to a bright future for a girl, her family, and her nation, which is different from what I found in the tweets on Nigerian twitter. Afterall, the Chibok girls were in school whilst they were kidnapped. Inadequate security and misplaced priorities on the part of the local authorities are deeply rooted factors that paved the way for the tragic kidnapping.

In discussing access to education as offered by users of North American and European twitter, the UK media noted Boko Haram's English translation: "Western

education is sinful or forbidden.” *The Guardian* reported that “civilians and schools are becoming increasingly targeted. Hence there is need for western governments to provide assistance to Nigeria to tackle the insurgency, the international support dimension was not as pronounced as it was in the Nigerian news media. Pakistan and Nigeria have some of the highest number of children out of school” (Mark, 2014, para 13). The newspaper also captured how Boko Haram militants kidnapped the Chibok government girls' secondary school, “loaded” girls into lorries and drove away, leaving “abandoned desks” in their wake and “burned down classrooms” (Mark 2014).

The *New York Times* described female education as “the greatest nightmare for extremists” because of its potential for empowerment (Mcdowell, 2014, para 2). Readers were urged to support global development programs such as camfed.org, a non-profit organisation that promotes the education of women in the poorest communities of sub-Saharan Africa, and to urge Congress to pass the International Violence Against Women Act. The U.S. media adapted the #BringBackOurGirls campaign with this framework to the ongoing foreign policy concerns and legislative debates.

Transnational Feminism

Tweets from non-Nigerians in the U.S, U.K, Canada, India, South Africa and other African countries comprised about 11 tweets (16.2%). I observed that these tweets offered solidarity on issues that Black women face, thereby providing a transnational voice in condemnation of the kidnapping. Solidarity and protests on the #BringBackOurGirls campaign by racially marginalised women across third world countries and first world countries were portrayed in these tweets:

@Julie S. Lalonde (2014, May 1): Hey Canadians! Don't get so high & mighty about 'those men' re: #BringBackOurGirls We've got hundreds of missing aboriginal women here.

@Rosiemontene (2014, May 4): #BringBackOurGirls there is a protest happening in Pretoria! If you are the organizers, please contact me so we can join forces.

@Bonn1eGreer (2014, May 3): To all black (African American, Afro-Caribbean etc.) celebs, don't wait for Brad, Angelina & George Clooney to step in to #BringBackOurGirls.

In addition to protests in South Africa, it was interesting to note that the issue of missing Indigenous women in Canada can be connected to the #BringBackOurGirls campaign. According to a 2015 YWCA Niagara Region article, the kidnapping of the Chibok girls and missing and murdered indigenous women points to a social problem of hate and violence towards women. The article explained that Boko Haram and the kidnapping of the Chibok girls is a problem that needs to be addressed by the intervention of the Nigerian government; likewise, the missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada need to be acknowledged acted upon by the Canadian government. The issues of misogyny, racism, hate, and the oppression of women's rights as causes behind the kidnapping of the young Chibok girls and murder of Indigenous women needs to be acknowledged and addressed by both the Nigerian and Canadian governments (YWCA Niagara Region, 2015).

Black activists in the United States expressed their solidarity; importantly, Black celebrities used their public platforms to raise awareness. The use of #BlackLivesMatter in the same tweets as #BringBackOurGirls revealed a semblance of a united front, especially among Black women both in the global north and the

global south. In the United States, where domestic violence and sexual assault cases among Black women are on the rise, the use of #BlackLivesMatter and #BringBackOurGirls by African Americans shows how Black female bodies are constantly violated. It also shows how the oppressions of Black women, even in the context of Nigerian women in Nigeria, is not regarded as a priority to address. This is supported by Maxfield's (2016), observation that the hashtags #BringBackOurGirls and #BlackLivesMatter were being used in the same context by feminists outside of Nigeria. Maxfield further states that the use of these hashtags together "shared more complex characterizations of Black and African lives and more actively critiqued the national and international contexts in which those lives were threatened" (9).

Elements of transnational feminism were highlighted during a White House weekly address. On Mother's Day, May 10, 2014, Michele Obama likened the experiences of Chibok girls to that of Malala Yousafzai from Pakistan, as Malala was shot in the head by a member of the Taliban group for speaking out for girls' education. The former First Lady stated that "what happened in Nigeria was not an isolated incident. It's a story we see every day as girls around the world risk their lives to pursue their ambitions. It's the story of girls like Malala Yousafzai from Pakistan" (The White House: para. 12). This statement by the former First Lady shows that attacks on girls and women based on their gender is a global routine strategy by terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda and the Taliban group.

Lack of Empathy

Lack of empathy was frequently deduced from the North American/European twitter data set. About 22 tweets (32%) exuded some level of apathy and indifference to the kidnapping of Chibok girls whilst using the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls in their contents:

@GibsoonCorp (2014, June 6): No matter how much u use a hash tag!
#BringBackOurGirls or #OccupyGhana it can never and will never make a
difference.

@tellypolly (2014, May 5): 2 million Nigerians in UK realise they are a
developing country and have no shame in asking UK for help
#BringBackOurGirls #NigerianGirls.

The above tweets reveal indifference and lack of empathy that occurred frequently in North American/European twitter. I also observed that that one of the above twitter account holders is a white female former Sky News presenter, as it was indicated in the bio section of her twitter page. Some of the tweets in the North American/European twitter data set revealed harsh criticisms of the #BringBackOurGirls Campaigns. The users, in my opinion, saw the kidnapping of the Chibok girls as a problem for the Nigerian government, rather than an issue for the international community. I believe that despite that the fact that the kidnapping occurred to girls in Nigeria, it was and still is a global issue. This is due to the fact that Boko Haram, the terrorist group, is affiliated with Al-Qaeda, a globally known terrorist group (Zenn, 2018).

#BringBackOurGirls: Comparisons between US, UK and the Nigerian media.

According to Olson (2016), “#BringBackOurGirls shows the potential that cyber-communities have for setting the agenda for mainstream media sources around issues that are life-changing for women and girls around the world” (772). Due to the nature of the kidnapping incident, the hashtag on social media also gained currency in the mainstream mass media. Lasorsa et al (2012), explain that the global coverage of the 2014 #BringBackOurGirls movement reveals the symbiotic relationship between

mainstream and social media, that is, communications practitioners are searching Twitter for content, educating their readers, and delivering relevant reporting. According to Maxfield (2016), media in the global North replaced Abdullahi and Ezekwesili, the Nigerian originators of the campaign, with Los Angeles film director, Ramaa Moseley. Both *ABC News and CNN* aired interviews with Moseley, whom they unduly credited with creating the hashtag. Maxfield continued by explaining that “indeed, Moseley initially positioned herself as creator, explaining that she felt compelled to draw attention to the mass abduction, given that people were not talking about it except for ‘a few people, who are Nigerian’” (pp 891). Such statements represent Nigerian citizens as irrelevant to a campaign started by and on behalf of Nigerians. According to Maxfield, this shows that, in the imaginary of the Global North, any brown face can function as the campaign’s posterchild, but none could stand as its figurehead. This is evident in Levick, the US public relations firm employed by the Nigerian government to change the narratives around the inefficiency of the Nigerian government in their attempts to find the kidnapped Chibok girls.

I observed similarities between the Nigerian, British and US media in their casual understanding of, or emphasis on the kidnapping of the Chibok girls. The two countries’ mainstream media announced and condemned the kidnapping of the Chibok girls and also pleaded for the rescue of the girls. The *New York Times* and The *Washington Post* framed their discussions surrounding the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls by focusing on the international community, especially the need for the United States to rescue the girls and execute an anti-terrorist agenda. *Channels TV*, on the other hand, framed and discussed the hashtag by focusing on Nigeria’s policy shortcomings on women’s issues and criticizing the Nigerian government on

accountability. Thus, while Nigerian newspapers such as *This Day* and *Vanguard* also employed the framework underlining the crucial need for the international community's support, the inadequacies of the Nigerian government in locating the girls remained central in their discussions. The US media adopted the #BringBackOurGirls as a platform to discuss the capabilities of U.S. foreign policy, the war on terror, celebrity culture and online activism. The mainstream media in all three countries pointed out Nigerian political leaders and agencies' shortcomings in seeking a solution to the abduction of the Chibok girls. The press in Nigeria, the UK, and the US made various aspects of the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls campaign prominent by including detailed reports on the kidnapping and subsequent agitation (both online and offline), the (in)actions of national and international political actors, an emphasis on the socio-historical history of Boko Haram and Nigeria's role in global politics, and a section on the importance of online advocacy.

It is imperative to note that despite the fact that white western feminists have condemned the actions of Boko Haram countless times, it is important for them to have an understanding of the “historical and political agencies” of third world women (Herr, 2014: 6). In the case of the kidnapping, the girls were studying for their examinations; issues to be understood includes the historical atrocities caused by Boko Haram in Nigeria, insecurity, and inability of the Nigerian security personnel, and the long-standing oppressions faced by female children and women in Nigeria. Education as the solution and consistent path to the empowerment of the girl-child in the Third World is a product of the grand narrative that the global north and western feminists have create, one in which the third world woman is “uneducated, uncivilised and ignorant” (Mohanty, 1991:56). As a citizen of a third world country, I believe that transparent governance, acceptance of human rights, increased security and value on

the lives of the people is the first step in ensuring a thorough and safe education for the girl-child.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The hashtag #BringBackOurGirls and the kidnapping of the Chibok girls was and, in some cases, is still being discussed. The adoption of the hashtag by individuals and / or media houses has revealed how these discussions vary in relation to the nationality of these individuals or the country of origin of these media houses. These adoptions were made on the basis of the grand narratives of third world countries as emphasized by Mohanty (1991) and Maxfield (2016), foreign relations, and the on-the-ground-realities. With some availability of information through social media and mainstream media, the experiences that women face, such as insecurity and oppression, can be addressed, and solutions directly addressing these issues can be offered. The combination of the influence of western activists and people from the global north with the experiences of oppressed women such as the victims of kidnapping, can lead to the implementation of global policies that directly or indirectly impact the security of women.

Infusing a third world feminist perspective into the analysis of the adoption of the hashtag centers the experiences and realities of the economically less privileged girl-child and woman, not only in Nigeria, but possibly in other third world countries. Third world feminism not only address the lived oppressions of women in third world countries. It also exposes political corruption and inadequacies within nation-states, especially third world countries, thereby providing an inter-disciplinary platform for further research, between Women and Gender Studies and Political Science or International Relations. In other words, aside from addressing issues of oppression of

the girl-child, the third-world feminist perspective exposed local socio-political factors that indirectly affect them. Tweets from the Nigerian twitter with headlines from Nigerian media houses portrayed the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls as a product of protests, rallies and local realities. On the other hand, tweets from the North American/European twitter and media houses from these regions hardly addressed the local on-the-ground experiences such as the issues of insecurities that women face, government corruption and Nigeria police brutality against the #BringBackOurGirls protesters, while framing the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls. Content from people of these regions focused mainly on the terrorist act of the kidnapping of the girls.

As I highlighted in my Introduction, I not only wanted to explore the varying themes of discussions surrounding the hashtag and kidnapping of the Chibok girls, I also wanted to find traces of international laws and policies in place that addressed the kidnapping of the Chibok girls and rescue strategies. According to Nichols (2014), “the members of the Security Council welcomed the ongoing efforts of the Government of Nigeria to ensure the safe return of the abducted girls to their families, as well as international efforts to provide assistance to the Nigerian authorities in this regard and bring the perpetrators to justice” (para 4). He continued by stating that “U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon explained that Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan had accepted his offer to send a high-level U.N. envoy to discuss how the United Nations can better support the government’s efforts to tackle the internal challenges” (para 5). The United Nations Security Council has the primary responsibility to maintain peace and security in the international system. As noted on the United Nations website, “the Security Council in some cases, can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security” (para 2).

According to a UN Security Council report released on July 2014, it was the kidnapping of nearly 300 schoolgirls in Chibok, on 14-15 April, triggering protests both in Nigeria and internationally, that eventually brought closer attention to the group in the Security Council. It also reported that “following a 5 May attack on a market place that killed hundreds, the Council issued a press statement on 9 May calling for the release of the girls, noting for the first time the threat that Boko Haram poses regionally and stating its intention to consider measures against the group” (para 4). As a response, the UN Secretary- General dispatched “Djinnit, Special Representative of the Secretary-General to West Africa and Head of UN Office to West Africa (UNOWA) to Nigeria from 12 to 15 May. The Secretary-General also announced that the UN would provide an integrated support package, including assistance for the abducted girls once they were released and for their families and communities, as well as increasing support to address socio-economic problems in northern Nigeria” (para 5). It was interesting to note in the Security Council report that “the Council has largely refrained from making pronouncements on Boko Haram, due to sensitivities from Nigeria, even before it became a Council member in January” (para 17). According to the report, Nigeria had decided that Boko Haram was an internal issue and had opposed suggested statements from the Security Council in the past. I believe that this explains why the presence of international troops or the UN Peacekeeping force was not evident in the rescue of the girls.

Challenges and Limitations

The main challenge I experienced while researching, was manually selecting tweets within the first three months the hashtag commenced. With about 700 tweets posted within those months, manually scrolling and reading through was time

consuming and tasking, as I did not conduct a computer-based analysis because twitter as a platform does not authorize third party programs to access tweets older than one month. The kidnapping occurred in April 14, 2014 and the first #BringBackOurGirls tweet was posted April 23, 2014. Thus, the alternative was to manually scroll through, read and deduce themes.

In addition to this, the effectiveness of the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls campaign was limited to creating social awareness and not social change. Despite the online pressures and global protests, about 112 out of 276 Chibok girls are still missing. Since the kidnapping of the Chibok girls, Boko Haram has continued its atrocities of kidnapping and using girls below the age of 15 years and women as suicide bombs (Markovic, 2019). In the 'safer' parts of the country, some reports indicate that sexual assaults of women by the police are becoming rampant and these cases are not being addressed by the Nigerian government. The popularity of hashtags such as #EndSars, #BringBackOurGirls, #SayNOtodomesticviolence and #Metoo have declined as twitter users tend to move on to the next trendy topic. The interpretations of tweets from the North American/European twitter also show a level of uninformed opinions about the hashtag as explained earlier. These reveal themselves as limitations of hashtag activism.

There is also a literature gap on the third world feminist analysis of the #BringBackOurGirls. Despite the fact that the kidnapping of the Chibok girls occurred in 2014, I observed that most of the academic work on the kidnapping and the hashtag were on media analysis. This made me rely heavily on the tweets and challenged me to thoroughly evaluate my data to answer the research questions.

Contributions

My hope for this thesis is to encourage the implementation of international policies to protect the lives and safety of women and the girl-child in third world countries. I believe that the influence of western feminism in collaboration with the stories and experiences of third world feminists can acquire the attention of international policy makers. This is because the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls is beyond a twitter campaign, as national security within a country is important in securing girls' education.

Future studies on the shortcomings of international laws concerning violence against women and children within nation-states should be conducted. I believe that more academic work from the third world feminist perspective concerning the impact of local political complexities on women and the girl-child should be conducted. These future studies can be supported by the contemporary use of hashtags such as #BringBackOurGirls, #SayNoToDomesticViolence and other hashtags that have emerged, due to the oppressions of women in the third world.

I recommend the continual use and more emphasis on feminist content analysis in Gender studies, as it provided a platform to examine not only gender constructs but underlying local socio-political contexts of the research. In the field of Women and Gender Studies, the knowledge of political cultures of nation-states is essential, especially in the implementation of social policies that directly and indirectly impact women within nation-states and globally.

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Appendix

Themes in the Nigerian twitter

Police brutality against protesters

@dayoomina (2014, April 29): Police are to serve and protect the civilians not to fire teargas and assault against them, tomorrow we are working together to #BringBackOurGirls @obyzezs.

@SaniKadiri (2014, May 5): Chibok women leader in Abuja Mrs Naomi Mutah has been arrested by the police with regards to the protests @obyzezs

@ogundamisi #BringBackOurGirls.

@Riddwane (2104, May 7): @omojuwa is being detained again by the Nigeria police. Is this part of the crackdown on conveners of #BringBackOurGirls protest? @obyzezs

@midelight73 (2014, May 13): #BringBackOurGirls advocates in Ilorin have been arrested by Nigeria Police @obyzezs.

@theskinpriest (2014, May 13): They are taking us away #BringBackOurGirls
@obyzeeks @Ayorub.

2015 Ekiti State Elections and World Economic Forum

@catherinemakokera (2014, April 29): Surely those attending the WEF next week in Abuja need to talk about #BringBackOurGirls. I hope it won't be leaders with heads in sand.

@RuggedyBaba (2014, June 26): It's so sad that our leaders put more energy into elections than moves to #BringBackOurGirls.

Trivialised Experiences

@tundeleye (2014, June 15): The international media attention has reduced. And so, our government no longer talks about #BringBackOurGirls.

@Joselyn_Dumas (2014, June 21): Wait a min!! What happened to the #Chibok girls??? Did our campaign on social media fall on deaf ears? #bringbackourgirls #wherearethegirls.

Themes in the North American/European Twitter

Girls Right and Access to Education

@Standford Education: The attack in Nigeria is part of a global backlash against girls' education, writes @NickKristof <http://stanford.io/1kQvnan>
#BringBackOurGirls.

@MrsSOsbourne (2014, June 16): #BringBackOurGirls and secure the right for every girl and boy to get an education on #AfricanChildDay
<http://aworldatschool.org>.

Transnational Feminism

@TheFiveFound (2014, April 26): We are standing in Solidarity with the Mothers of Kidnapped schoolgirls in Nigeria plz join us & them using #BringBackOurGirls.

@IamSophiaNelson (2014, May 1): I need my white sisters, and Latino sisters to join their black & African sisters and raise their voice for these girls. #BringBackOurGirls.

@stellacreasy (2014, May 7): Heading to support vigil for #BringBackOurGirls campaign at Nigerian embassy on Northumberland ave #1BillionRising #vawg #worldiswatching.

Lack of Empathy

@notjustme (2014, May 9): Alright #BringBackOurGirls, what's next? it's one thing or the other in Africa.

