



BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY: A THREAT TO THE GIRL-CHILD'S ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN THE NORTHEAST OF NIGERIA

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Abstract:

Ensuring access to quality education for girls across the globe is crucial to sustainable development. Several barriers such as poverty, gender inequality, poor infrastructures, insecurity, etc. are known to impede the realization of girls' right to education. These issues are further aggravated by armed conflicts such as the Boko Haram insurgency. This study investigated the threat posed by the Boko Haram insurgency on the girl-child's access and inclusion in education in the North-eastern part of Nigeria. The study answered a research question and tested a research hypothesis. The target population was the Northeast of Nigeria. The sample for the study was drawn from Adamawa state. The sample size was 180 teachers randomly sampled from public primary and secondary schools in the three senatorial zones in the state. A ten item Likert scale designed by the researchers was used to collect data. The instrument was validated by experts in Test and Measurement and the reliability of the instrument was determined through test-retest method of testing reliability. A Cronbach alpha correlation coefficient of .67 was obtained. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and Chi square test. The result of the study revealed the following barriers to access and inclusion: damage to school facilities, emotional disorders, fear and insecurity, stigma, poverty, unwanted pregnancy, forced marriage and lack of teachers. The hypothesis tested was rejected indicating that the girl-child's access and inclusion in education in the North East of Nigeria has been significantly affected by the Boko

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Haram insurgency. The study recommended the use of flexible learning, abolition of school fees for girls, rehabilitation programmes for victims of insurgency, guidance and counselling services and programmes to address stigmatizing attitudes toward girls and women to ensure access and inclusion in education.

Keywords: access, Boko Haram, insurgency, girl-child, education, Northeastern Nigeria

1. Introduction

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (article 26), everyone has the right to education. Regardless of gender, race, location, nationality or physical condition, everyone has the right to quality education. This was further underscored by the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) goal number four which seeks to *“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”* This was further expounded as follows:

“Ensure gender equality, human rights, the rule of law, and universal access to public services. Reduce relative poverty and other inequalities that cause social exclusion. Prevent and eliminate violence and exploitation, especially for women and children.”

The importance of girls' education cannot be over emphasized. Education has a profound effect on girls' and women's ability to claim other rights and achieve status in society, such as economic independence and political representation (DFID, 2005). Educating girls is the world's simple best development investment. Ensuring access to quality and consistent education for girls across the globe is crucial to preventing early or forced marriage, lowering maternal and neonatal mortality, spurring a woman's financial independence; creating smaller more sustainable families, shrinking rates of HIV/AIDS and malaria, opening opportunity for women's political leadership increasing children's educational attainment levels and boosting national economic growth (Alam, Warren & Applebaum, 2016). When girls go to school, they tend to delay marriage, have fewer but healthier children, and contribute more to family income and national productivity. In fact, educating girls quite possibly yield a higher rate of return than any other investment available in the developing world' (Summers, 1992). When it comes to promoting sustainable development and fostering viable security, educated girls are force multipliers (Alam, et al, 2016).

According to Plan (2013), humanitarian emergencies caused by natural hazards, conflict or both, are major barriers to the realization of girls' right to education. In many

countries, they exacerbate the issues that are already hindering girls' access to education such as poverty and gender inequality. Reporting on barriers to conflict-affected Malian children's' education, Shah and Scholz (2013) listed the following as barriers to girls' access and inclusion in education: poverty; ethnic identity; perception of educational values; discrimination against girls; security; physical distance; challenges of adolescents; poor learning environments and insufficient teachers. Similarly, Katz, La Placa and Hunter (2007), reported three basic types of barriers to involvement in education. These include: physical and practical barriers, social barriers and stigma barriers.

In Nigeria and many other developing nations, gender, interact with other factors such as poverty, geographical location, traditional and religious beliefs to affect access to education. This situation is further compounded in conflict situations especially armed conflict. Armed conflict in whatsoever form has an adverse effect on children's access to quality education. Exposure to conflict affects children in several ways, ranging from direct killing and injuries to more subtle, yet persistent and irreversible effects on schooling, health, nutrition, future opportunities and well-being. Children's educational attainment is particularly compromised by exposure to violence (Justino, 2014). Jones and Naylor (2014) reported the following as channels through which conflict can impact on access to education and learning. These channels are:

1. School closure due to targeted attacks, collateral damage and military use of school building;
2. Death and injuries to teachers and students;
3. Fear of sending children to school and teachers' fear of attending school due to targeted attacks, threats of attacks or general insecurity reducing freedom of movement;
4. Recruitment of teachers and students by armed forces (state and non-state);
5. Forced population displacement leading to interrupted education;
6. Public health impact of conflict which reduces access and learning;
7. Increased demand for household labour;
8. Reduction in returns to education;
9. Reduced educational expenditure due to overall reduction in resources and shifting priorities;
10. Reduced public capacity to deliver education.

This study is concerned with the effect of Boko Haram insurgency on the girl-child's access and inclusion in education in the North-eastern part of Nigeria. The question that comes to mind now is 'What is Boko Haram?'

2. What is Boko Haram?

Boko Haram is an Islamic sect in Nigeria that believes politics in Northern Nigeria has been seized by a group of corrupt false Muslims. It wants to wage a war against them and the Federal Republic of Nigeria generally to create a 'pure' Islamic state ruled by sharia law (Walker, 2012). Boko Haram which simply means "western education is forbidden" is a Hausa phrase derived from a Hausa word 'Boko' meaning western education and an Arabic word 'Haram' meaning Forbidden or sin. Officially, Boko Haram calls itself "Jama'atu Ahlus Sunna Lidda'wati Wal Jihad" meaning 'People committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's teaching and Jihad.'

Boko Haram as an Islamic sect was formed in 2002 in Maiduguri, Borno state by an Islamic scholar called Mohammed Yusuf. The Ideology of Boko Haram sect under Mohammed Yusuf was basically the opposition of western education and western way of life. Boko Haram political philosophy sought to overthrow the government and implement sharia law throughout the country. According to Yusuf, the system of government based on 'western values' has resulted in the increase in corruption, poverty, unemployment and continued suppression of true Islam (Bartolotta, as cited in Imasuen, 2015).

In 2009, a deadly violence broke out between government troops and members of the Boko Haram sect, which resulted in huge civilian casualties. The police and the army retaliated with a five day assault against the sect which led to the death of Mohammed Yusuf and hundreds of Boko Haram members. With the death of Yusuf in 2009, the sect underwent a period of transformation as the former deputy Abubakar Shekau assumed the leadership of the sect in 2010. The sect then re-emerged as a major security threat to the stability of Nigeria as a nation (Olafioye, as cited in Imasuen, 2015).

According to the Nigeria Security Tracker (NST) (2014), there has been 64 incidences of terror attacks by the Boko Haram sect in the Northeast region between 2009-2014, with different methods of attacks ranging from armed attacks, bombing and explosives, midnight terror attacks, mass murder/suicide raids, assassination/murder and abductions. These attacks has claimed the lives of not less than 2,320 in 2009; 3,000 in 2010; 3,560 in 2011; 3,700 in 2012; 4,420 in 2013 and 5,000 in 2014 (Nigeria Security Tracker, 2014).

The targets of Boko Haram include Christians, students, traditional leaders, Muslims who oppose its activities, and civil servants and their family members. Boko Haram has abducted at least 500 women and girls since 2009 from more than a dozen towns and villages in Borno and Yobe states. Victims interviewed by Human Right

Watch reported they were abducted at home, working on their farms, at school, travelling on roads or during attacks on their villages and towns (Human Rights Watch, 2014).

The following abductions were reported by the Human Rights Watch (2014):

1. Abduction of a teenage girl found hiding in a Church in Maiduguri on the first night of the July 2009 Boko Haram uprising.
2. The abduction of a woman from her home in Maiduguri after her husband was killed for refusing to renounce his Christian faith- July 28, 2009.
3. The abduction of 12 women from a police barracks in Bama was the first case of abduction of more than one woman in a single attack and signalled a campaign of violence against women and girls (BBC News, May 15, 2013).
4. The abduction of some 20 women and girls from a check point set up on the Damaturu- Maiduguri high-way – September 2013.
5. The abduction of several teenage girls from their homes and while selling their goods- November, 2013.
6. The abduction of twenty female students of Government Girls Science College and five street hawkers during an attack on Konduga in Borno State in February 2014.
7. The abduction of 219 girls from the Government Secondary school Chibok on the night of April 14, 2014.
8. The abduction of six women and two children from the village of Wala in Borno state on April 16, 2014.
9. The abduction of five women from Gujba village in Yobe state on the April 25, 2014.
10. The abduction of eleven teenage girls during attacks on Wala and Warabe villages in Southern Borno state on May 6, 2014.
11. The abduction of sixty women from Kummabza village in Damboa local government area Borno state in June 2014.
12. Boko Haram also abducted at least twenty Fulani women from Bakin Kogi, Garkin Fulani and Rugar Hardo villages near Chibok in Borno state on June 6, 2014.

The abduction of school girls from the Government Secondary School in Chibok, Borno state on the night of April 14, 2014 remains the biggest single incident of abduction by Boko Haram.

Studies on the effect of Boko Haram insurgency on education reported that school attendance has been significantly affected in the areas prone to attacks because parents disallowed their children from attending school for fear of attacks and possible

abduction (Patrick & Felix, 2013 & Ugwumba & Odom, 2014). They also reported the loss of trained teachers and other personnel (Ugwumba & Odom, 2014 & olaniya, 2015). Indefinite closure of schools as a result of the destruction of infrastructure and facilities was also reported (Ugwumba & Odom, 2014 and Olaniya, 2015. This study is concerned with the impact of Boko Haram insurgency on the girl-child's access to education in the North-eastern Nigeria.

3. Problem of the Study

UNICEF (2014) warned that attacks on schools and the abduction of school girls could further undermine access to education in parts of Nigeria, especially in the North which is home to nearly 60% of the country's 10.5 million out of school children. Evidently, Boko Haram insurgency has had a devastating effect on the educational system especially in areas worst affected by the insurgency. This study was designed to investigate the effect of the insurgency on the girl-child's access to education in the Northeast of Nigeria.

3.1 Purposes of the Study

1. To determine the different forms of barriers imposed by Boko Haram insurgency on the girl-child's access to education in the North East of Nigeria.
2. To determine whether Boko Haram insurgency has significantly affected the girl-child's access to education in the Northeast of Nigeria.

3.2 Research Question

1. What are the different forms of barriers imposed by the Boko Haram insurgency on the girl-child's access to education in the Northeast of Nigeria?

3.3 Research Hypothesis

HO₁: The Girl-child's access to education has not been significantly affected by the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast of Nigeria.

4. Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design. The target population was the North-eastern part of Nigeria which is made up of six states. The sample was drawn from Adamawa state. This is because as at the time of conducting this study, only Adamawa state was easily accessible. The sample size was 180 teachers randomly sampled from

public primary and secondary schools in the three senatorial zones in the state. A ten item Likert scale designed by the researchers was used in data collection. The instrument was validated by experts in Test and Measurement and the reliability of the instrument was determined through test-retest method of testing reliability. A Crombach alpha correlation coefficient of .67 was obtained. The instrument was administered personally by the researchers in the central senatorial zone, while research assistants were used in the Northern and Southern senatorial zones. Of the 180 questionnaires administered, 174 were returned. 171 completed questionnaires were found to be valid while three were found to be invalid. The data collected was analysed with the aid of SPSS version 17. The research question raised was answered using descriptive statistics while the hypothesis was tested using Chi square test at 0.05 level of significance. For the descriptive statistic, an item with a mean score of 3.00 and above was accepted while an item with a mean score of less than 3.00 was rejected.

5. Results

The table below was used to answer the research question which states: *“What are the different forms of barriers to access and inclusion imposed on the girl-child by the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast of Nigeria?”*

Table 1: Descriptive statistics showing the mean score of each item

Items	N	Max.	Min.	X	Std. Dev.
1. Damage to school facilities	171	1	5	3.06	1.69
2. Post-traumatic stress disorder	171	1	5	3.58	1.37
3. Emotional disturbance	171	1	5	3.85	1.43
4. Fear and insecurity	171	1	5	3.53	1.42
5. Stigmatization and rejection	171	1	5	3.50	1.46
6. Poor academic performance	171	1	5	3.54	1.48
7. Poverty	171	1	5	4.11	1.37
8. Girls' abduction	171	1	5	4.06	1.39
9. Early marriage/unwanted pregnancy	171	1	5	3.38	1.49
10. Educational Disruption	171	1	5	3.86	1.47

From table 1 above the statistics revealed the following:

1. Many schools were damaged by the insurgency and many others were closed due to the insurgency.
2. Many girls and women are showing signs of post-traumatic stress disorders.

3. Many girls and women are emotionally disturbed as a result of the insurgency.
4. Parents are afraid to let their daughters attend school because of fear and insecurity.
5. Many girls and women who were victims of the insurgents are going through stigmatization and rejection.
6. A drop in girls' academic performance attributed to the insurgency was reported.
7. Many families are plunged into poverty.
8. Girls are forced into marriage to their abductors.
9. Girls are forced early marriage as a result of unwanted pregnancy.
10. Girls' education generally has been disrupted by the insurgency.

The table below was used to test the null hypothesis which states:

HO₁: The Girl-child's access and inclusion in education has not been significantly affected by the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast of Nigeria.

Table 2: Chi-square summary of the impact of Boko Haram insurgency on the girl-child's access to education in the Northeast of Nigeria

	Effect of Boko Haram on Girl-child access to education
Chi-square	64.614
df	33
Asymp. Sig.	.001

Table 2 above indicates that $X^2(33, N = 171) = 64.61, p = .001$. From the result, the p value is less than 0.05 hence, the null hypothesis was rejected at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, suggesting that Boko Haram insurgency has negatively impacted the girl-child's access to and inclusion in education in the Northeast of Nigeria.

6. Discussion

In response to the only research question posed in this study, which sought to establish the different barriers posed on the girl-child's access and inclusion in education in the Northeast of Nigeria, the study revealed the following barriers: damage to school facilities, emotional disorders, fear and insecurity, stigmatization, poverty, unwanted pregnancy, forced marriage and lack of teachers. The most important single barrier is poverty. This finding agrees with Shah and Scholz (2013), Plan (2013) and Justino (2014). With the loss of their properties and their means of livelihood, parents who survived the attacks could no longer sponsor their children in school; worst still many

parent were killed during attacks thereby rendering their children orphans. Poverty caused many young school girls to go into prostitution. Some were unlucky they got pregnant which lead to early marriage others could not trace the men responsible for their pregnancies hence, had to bear the burden alone. Some of these girls and women were forced into marriage to their abductors who sexually abused while in captivity. Another important barrier to access and inclusion in education is stigmatization. Stigma is directly linked to poverty which lead so many young girls to do things that are unacceptable by the society such as prostitution. Another important cause of stigma is abduction. This agrees with Katz, et al, (2007). Many abducted girls manage to escape only to be greeted with rejection and avoidance at home, at school and in the society. Hence, many are excluded educationally and socially. Another barrier to access is fear and insecurity. As a result of fear, many parents have disallowed their daughters from attending school thereby denying them access to education thus agreeing with Jones and Naylor (2013) and Shah and Scholz (2013). Lastly, damage to school facilities has made it impossible for learning to take place hence, denying learners of access to education, this agrees with Jones and Naylor (2013).

The hypothesis tested was rejected thereby suggesting that Boko Haram insurgency has significantly affected the girl-child's access to education in the North East of Nigeria. This is understandable considering the many barriers the insurgency has imposed on access to education.

6.1 Strategies for removing barriers

Poverty as a barrier will continue to hinder many victims of insurgency from seeking for help in whatever form more so girls and women considering their vulnerability. Hence, to be of help to this disadvantaged population, the needed help has to be taken down to where they live. To ensure access to education for the girl-child, this paper suggests the following strategies:

1. The utilization of flexible learning strategies in combination with outreach educational programmes.
2. Abolition of school fees for affected girls and women.
3. Provision of rehabilitation programmes for returning abducted girls and women and for sexually abused girls and women.
4. Provision of remedial programmes for girls who have been forced by the insurgency to start school late or to stay away from school for a period of time.
5. Provision of outreach guidance and counselling services.
6. Provision of programmes to address stigmatizing attitudes toward girls and women who were victims of the Boko Haram insurgency.

7. Conclusion

This study investigated the effect of the Boko Haram insurgency on the girl-child's access and inclusion in education in the Northeast of Nigeria. The study revealed that girls' access and inclusion has been threatened by the insurgency. It also revealed the different barriers to the girl-child's access and inclusion in education which include: damage to school facilities, emotional disorders, fear and insecurity, stigmatization, poverty, unwanted pregnancy, forced marriage and lack of teachers. To ensure access to education, this study recommended the use of flexible learning, abolition of school fees for girls, rehabilitation and remedial programmes for girls, guidance and counselling services and provision of programmes for addressing stigmatizing attitudes.

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