

Exploratory Study On Socio-Economic Impact of Boko Haram Insurgency in Northern Yobe State

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Abstract

The Boko Haram insurgency that begun in 2009 has had a devastating consequences particularly in the North Eastern Nigeria where the crisis emanated. Several studies have reported on the general impact of the insurgency on different aspect of national life. However, each of these studies have its limitations specifically on context and methodological approaches which ultimately, provided the need for further studies to enrich existing literature. This study aimed at exploring the lived experiences of the socio-economic impact of Boko Haram insurgency in northern Yobe State, which is generally considered as one of the most affected areas by the insurgency. In doing so, the study focussed on exploring specifically on the economic, educational and health impacts in the region. In-depth interviews and focus group discussion methods were used to collect data from 20 purposely selected informants, whose ages are between 25 to 60 years and have lived in the study areas for upward of 15 years. The data collected through the interviews was coded, analysed and emerging themes from the data were identified and presented according to the research question. Major findings of the study show that the Northern Yobe State experienced both physical and psychological effects as evidenced in decline of commercial activities, destruction of health and education facilities across the affected region. At the end, based on the findings, the paper recommended for total overhaul and reinvigoration of the security apparatus as well renovation of the destroyed skills acquisition complex in the study area with the aim of mitigating the effects and fostering peace that is essential in the drive towards ensuring lasting peace in the area.

Key words: *Boko Haram, Socio-Economic Impact, Northern Yobe State*

Introduction

Since 2009, the Boko Haram insurgency in northeast Nigeria has resulted in significant displacement of communities and loss of lives in the region. Boko Haram is an Islamic sect whose activities that came into limelight in 2009, is predominantly based in North Eastern Nigeria. As a Hausa word, Boko Haram simply means that western or non-Islamic education is prohibited and the sect seeks to impose sharia law in Nigeria (Danjibo 2010). The sect started as a peaceful group advocating for strict interpretation of and use of Islamic injunctions as a replacement to existing democratic form of government (Shuaibu, Salleh, & Shehu, 2015). However, in 2009, the hitherto peaceful campaign of the group metamorphosed into armed conflict with security forces over the group's refusal to comply with a new bye-law of wearing protect helmet while riding motor cycle in Borno State. It was during this confrontation with security forces that the leader of the group in person of Mohammed Yusuf was arrested and later killed extra-judicially (Blanchard, 2014).

After the unfortunate incidence of 2009 signalling the foundation of armed conflict, the activities of the took destructive dimensions leading wanton destruction of lives and properties in the entire North Eastern region and by 2014, the sect had captured some portions of the north east with the aim of administering strict Islamic law (Ali, Musa, & Fada, 2016).

According to the National Emergency management Agency's (NEMA) assessment of the activities of the sect, 873,703 persons in the crisis prone region have been internally displaced while thousands have been either murdered, or kidnapped as a result of the insurgent's activities (Achumba et al., 2013). Similarly, it was estimated that as of 2017, not less than 9 billion dollars was lost by Nigeria as a result of the insurgency. The impact of the insurgency has not

only impacted the economy negatively; other sectors were also affected. For instance, schools, hospitals, bridges, and other critical infrastructures were adversely affected by the insurgency.

Although, literature have reported extensively on the socio-economic impact of the more than the decade Boko Haram insurgency, each these studies have their limitations, contexts, scope and methodological approaches. This however, provided the room for further studies to contribute to existing literature on the impact of Boko Haram insurgency. This study aims at exploring the socio-economic impact of Boko Haram insurgency among the people of Northern Yobe which is generally considered as one of the most affected areas. In doing so, the study focussed specifically on exploring the impact of the insurgency as it affects the economy, education and health sectors of the region.

Literature Review

The Boko Haram insurgency which began in 2009, has had a devastating impact not only in North Eastern states of Nigeria where the crisis emanated, the impact is felt in the entire country. In the more than 13 years of its commencement, the insurgency has resulted into significant destruction in almost every sphere of human endeavour in the regions so affected by the crisis. In spite of conflicting figures on the number of persons displaced as a result of the insurgency, it is estimated that no fewer than 2.5 million people abandoned their places of residence, over 2 million people were internally displaced and over 200 thousand migrated to neighbouring countries of Chad, Niger and Cameroon (Theresa, Okoli & Uroko, 2017). As reported by Akinbi (2015), the activities of the sect have constituted a significant security concerns to the nation and have made Northern Nigeria, particularly the Northeast as the strongest hold of Boko Haram activities and

by extension, the most dangerous region in the country. The crisis of the sect has negatively impacted on socio economic activities of the most affected areas and the nation at large (Maxwell, et al, 2017).

Economically, a lot of setbacks have been established as a result of the insurgency. For instance, while presenting an assessment of capital flows in Nigeria between 2014-2015, Danjuma (2021) reported that the Boko Haram conflict has caused a sharp decline in foreign direct investment (FDI) in Nigeria, from 469 billion USD in October 2014 to 17 billion USD in November 2015. These figures imply serious security and stability concerns that invariably discourages foreign investors from further expansion or reinvestment in the country. In a similar vein, Familusi (2019) noted that the security challenge caused by the sect's activities has reached to a point where businesses are closing down and business owners leaving the most affected northern regions. This has negative economic consequences where investors who normally are supposed to contribute to the economic development of the area have left since no reasonable investor would want to invest his capital in a violent prone environment (Falola and Heaton, 2008). As observed by Idika Kalu (2020), the Lake Chad region which hitherto used to be a flourishing area providing opportunities for livelihood, agriculture and access to markets and trade, the socio- economic potentials of the region has since been decimated as a result of widespread destruction, displacement occasioned by the Boko Haram Insurgency. The major trade routes and markets in the area have been greatly impaired as poverty and deep deprivation hold sway.

Implications of the insurgency on small and medium scale enterprises was also reported to have been negatively affected (Ali et al, 2016) As a review, the study is limited by its scope and focussed on Borno State only. Similarly, (Mbaya

et al, 2017) conducted a study on the effects of the insurgency on the physical and socioeconomic activities in Maiduguri.

On the educational sector, the activities of the insurgents also led to the killing and kidnapping of students, their teachers were not also spared in the numerous attacks. In 2014, it was reported that the group abducted 276 schoolgirls from Chibok (Ngozi et.al, 2018). Four years later, while the abducted Chibok girls are still in captivity, another set of 110 schoolgirls were abducted from Dapchi, the Headquarters of Bursari Local Government in northern Yobe State (Adegbola & Oluwabusayo, 2022).

According to The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), more than 1,400 schools have been destroyed, damaged, or looted primarily in the northeast, and more than 600,000 children have lost access to education. In Borno State alone, which is considered as the epicentre of the crisis, the impact on education sector has been particularly devastating; a total 611 teachers were killed and 19,000 fled their various schools since 2019 (Isokpan & Durojaye, 2017).

The impact of Boko Haram was not only limited to abductions of schoolgirls and destruction of educational infrastructure; negative impact of the insurgency on human capital investment was also reported. For instance, Bilyaminu, et al (2017) observed that Boko Haram crisis in Adamawa state had indirectly and significantly affected human capital investment through school enrolments, school attendance and school infrastructure. While using descriptive research design, Muhammad & Mohammed (2019) analysed the effects of Boko Haram insurgency on education sector in Yobe State. The findings of this study reveals the negative impact of the crisis on school enrolment, destruction of educational infrastructure and increased psychological pressure on the performance of teachers. Similarly, in an assessment of the effect

of Boko Haram insurgency in Yobe state using content analysis inquiry method, it was also reported that the crisis resulted to higher magnitude of insecurity to extent that parents have started enrolling their wards to neighbouring states not affected by the insurgency for education (Dauda, 2014). At the end, the paper recommended for further reorientation, creation of employment opportunities as well as robust measures to curtail high level of corruption in the polity to mitigate the effects in the areas so affected.

One other area most affected by Boko Haram insurgency is the health sector. The destruction to the sector were enormous, ranging from physical health infrastructure damage, limited access to healthcare services and exodus of healthcare personnel to areas with relative peace. The protracted armed conflicts in Northern Nigeria, exacerbated by the Boko Haram Insurgency (BHI), have led to the breakdown of a health system already experiencing years of neglect and underfunding (Howell et al., 2020).

Several studies are indicative of the effects of Boko Haram insurgency on the health sector. For example, Mobayode & Abebe (2019) have established the effects of the insurgency on child nutrition, child wasting and stunting. As reported in Demographic and Health Survey which used the difference-in-differences methods to examine the effect of the BHI on antenatal care visits, delivery at the health centre and delivery by a skilled professional, reported the negative effects of the insurgency on maternal health care access beyond North eastern region. Similarly, in a study of health service resilience in Yobe state, Ager, et al (2015) observed that the population migration and transport restrictions as a result of the insurgency have substantially impacted negatively on access to health provision in the state. The human resource for health capability of the state has been severely diminished through the outward migration of (especially non-

indigenous) health workers and the suspension of programmes providing external technical assistance.

Research Methodology

Study area: Yobe state is located within the latitude 11 North and longitude 13.5 East, with a total land area of 47,153 square kilometers. It shares common boundaries with Borno state to the east and southeast, Jigawa state to the northwest, Bauchi and Gombe states to the southwest. It also shares an international border with the Republic of Niger. This boundary stretches over 323km to the north of the State (Google Map, accessed on 23rd, June 2023).

Created in 1991, the state has 17 local government areas with a combined estimated population of 3,398,177 as of 2019. (NPC, 2019). The northern part of the state which is also considered as one of the most affected in terms of Boko Haram activities comprises Damaturu the state capital, Gujba, Tarmuwa, Bursari, Geidam and Yunusari.

Yobe state is generally agrarian with more than 80% of the population engaged in small scale subsistence farming with significant portion of the population as pastoralists engaged in commercial livestock including cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys and horses.

Research Design

An exploratory study that seeks in-depth understanding of experiences is best carried out through qualitative method of inquiry. This informs the choice of qualitative method of inquiry because it is consistent with exploring and understanding the characteristics of a group of people or individuals in a given environment in relation to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2007). According to Baxter and Jack (2008), qualitative methodology enables researchers to

study a phenomenon within its defined context. As this study focuses on exploring the impact of Boko Haram within the defined context of Northern Yobe State choice of qualitative approach offered the appropriate procedure in understanding of the issues in the context of a real-life experience (Yin, 2009).

The sampling methods used in this study are of two types; purposive sampling and snowballing technique. Purposive method was used in selecting the study informant whose foreknowledge, experiences and views were vital and comprehensive enough to answer the research questions (Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). On the latter method, we further identified more study informants through informants who were earlier identified to have met the criteria for the selection. The sampled informants were made of residents that have shown willingness to participate in the study and their ages ranged between 25 to 60 years old and who have lived in the study areas for more than 15 years.

In-depth interview technique was used as the primary data collection strategy in this study. These include in-depth face-face interview and focus group discussion to complement, as they are suitable for deeper understanding of how group of people lived and organized their lives and the meanings they attached to their experiences (Patton, 2002).

Semi-structured questions were used with the aid of interview guide to collect data for the study from 25 key informants. The key informants were drawn from residents in the study areas, markets union leaders, administrators of educational institutions as well as health care workers in the study areas. Interview guide with questions bordering on informant's experiences of the impact of the insurgency on economy, education and health sectors. The use of interview guide significantly helped in maintaining consistency and accuracy during interviews and analysis.

As proposed by Cresswell (2007) on its appropriateness in analysing qualitative data, the 'Data analysis spiral' was adopted in the analysis of the data. The data was analysed by coding to identify emerging patterns, themes, and categories as they give meanings in answering the research questions.

Results and Discussion

The Boko Haram insurgency which emerged in Nigeria in the early 2000 has significantly affected Northern Yobe State. In this section, we present findings of the study after a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the of the transcribed interviews. The findings of the research is thematically presented based on the outcome of the data collected to shed light of the impact of the insurgency in economic, health and education sectors of the affected region.

Economic Impact: Based on the data collected transcribed and analysed, findings revealed that one of the prominent ways the insurgency impacted economically is displacement of people of the area study. Most of the key informants interviewed, unanimously pointed to the fact that residents of these affected areas have on several occasions, forcefully displaced from their ancestral towns and villages to take refuge in safer areas mostly in internally displaced people's camps. This has significantly affected them as most residents are farmers and therefore rendered without means of livelihood than to rely on assistance from Governmental agencies, well-to-do individuals and Non-governmental organizations. These assistances are often inadequate to meet their basic needs. This finding is consistent with Ikpe's (2017) where he reported that forceful displacement occasioned by Boko Haram insurgency has significantly affected capital in-flow especially in the crisis prone areas and the country at large. Indeed, the findings also indicates that the displacement has significantly decimated agricultural output in the entire region

as most residents are farmers. In areas where people have resettled back to their homes, the attendant effect is still manifest in restrictions to fully cultivate their farmlands that are far from residential places due to fear of outright killings or abductions by remnants of the sect. these restrictions have not only affected their agricultural output but also the economic capabilities of most residents of the affected areas is greatly hampered

One other economic impact based on the finding was dwindled economic activity as a result of the insurgency. There is a general decline on trading activities especially in towns like Geidam and Yunusari local government areas that share international border with Niger Republic. It has been observed that prior to the insurgent's activities, these areas are flourishing with inflow of capital and goods due to trans-border trade. However, with the advent of the insurgency, most of these trading activities have ceased to exist and where they do exist, they are not as vibrant as they were before the insurgency. A typical example as noted by informants is the relocation of the international cattle market from Geidam town to Garin Alkali in Bade local government area. The popular Geidam cattle market that normally gets supplies from neighbouring Niger Republic provides means of livelihoods to thousands of people on weekly basis. The relocation of the market had negatively affected the means of livelihood for many in the town. This finding clearly confirms several studies Familusi (2019); (Falola & Heaton (2008); Idika-Kalu (2020) who have variously reported that the insurgency has had an adverse consequence on the economy of not only those areas affected by the insurgency but to the entire country.

Destruction of market places is one area that was adversely affected by the insurgency. Market place were repeatedly attacked, structures destroyed and goods running into billions of Naira were either carted away or completely

razed by the insurgents. This has significantly affected the economic viability of most businesses in the area. The fish, pepper and onion supply to other parts of the country from the area is also affected by the insurgency. Informants stated that these two products were hitherto in abundance in the area as businessmen from far and near patronizes the markets. With the sudden emergence of the insurgency with it associated adverse effects, most farmers producing the commodities have suffered severe economic loss or rendered incapable to produce in commercial quantities. The resultant consequences to most residents of the study area was forceful relocation to relatively peaceful environment as no investor would want to invest his capital in crisis prone area,

Impact on Health Sector: the health sector of the study areas was not also spared from the atrocities unleashed by the insurgents. In most of the interviews conducted with some informants on their experiences of the insurgency in the health sector, it has been repeatedly noted that the activities of the insurgents are noticeable in destruction of health care facilities, hospital consumables were either carted away or destroyed and resulting in shortage of skilled medical personnel in the area.

When asked to share his experiences on the impact of the insurgency on health sector, an informant who is a staff nurse in one of the General hospitals of the study areas, lamented that the impact of the insurgency can best be described as the worst thing that have ever happened to the health sector of the areas. According to the informant, the effect on both physical and psychological is beyond what can be imagined. Health care facilities have destroyed. While we witnessed increased cases requiring the attention of professional health personnel, the remaining function health facilities in the area have already been stretched due to referral cases mostly from rural areas whose health centres have

been grounded due to the destructive activities of the sect. and where these facilities are operational, lacked adequate manpower to meet the increasing demand for health care services. This situation is further compounded exodus of medical personnel from these areas to relatively peaceful areas.

While responding to research question on the impact of the insurgency on health sector of the study area, a retired nurse who was in active service in the height of the crisis but now retired, confirmed all the lamentations made by the serving nurse. According to the retired nurse, the devastating impact of the insurgency on the health sectors of the study area is enormous. In addition to damages done to physical facilities like hospital buildings and utility vehicles, the insurgency has also resulted in prevalence of communicable diseases such as diarrhoea, meningitis and cholera as most displaced people took refuge in internally displaced camps where the facilities in camps were overstretched and inadequate care. Narrating further, the informant noted that the impact of the crisis on health sector was not limited to destruction on facilities, some medical personnel were either killed or forced to seek for transfers to areas that are relatively peaceful due to fear of recurrent attacks by the insurgents. While corroborating the submissions made by the serving nurse, this finding also aligns Dunn's (2018) findings when he reported that the insurgency had negative consequences in form of damages to health facilities that resulted to decline in accessing health care services and widespread of communicable diseases.

Impact on education: In response to the third research question "How does the insurgency impacted on education sector of northern Yobe state, most of the informants expressed dismay on the magnitude of negative consequences the insurgency has unleashed on the education sector of the study area. Different phrases such as "completely destroyed" "razed" "abducted and

"only few enrolled" were variously used to describe in impact of the insurgency in northern Yobe state.

In his response to this research question, an academic staff in one of the tertiary institutions in the study area, lamented that the insurgency had not only negatively affected education by destroying educational facilities in the area but also affected other aspects like student's enrolment and distortion of academic calendars. The informant narrated that at a time when Governments at all levels are committing huge resources to entrepreneur development, in one of the insurgent's raids in the only State Polytechnic in the area, the state-to-earth entrepreneurship development complex building was almost completely brought down by the insurgents. As at time of this interview, the centre is seriously incapacitated in carrying out its mandate of training students in at least one trade area before their graduation. In addition to that, the informant also stated that in that particular Polytechnic, both staff and official vehicles were either carted away or burnt to ashes as you can see the remains of the burnt by the school's main gate.

While corroborating the submissions of the staff of the entrepreneurship centre, a registry staff of same Polytechnic added that, apart from destruction of physical facilities like classrooms and entrepreneurship complex, the activities of the insurgents had significantly affected student's enrolment to the institution. Prior to this crisis according to the informant, the school used to admit and register students into various department that came from various parts of the country in pursuit of education. However, with recurrent attacks by the insurgents, sometimes the institution had to remain closed for a complete semester. This development has not only instilled fear of insecurity in the minds of prospective students to seek admission into various programs of the school, some registered and continuing students had to resort to seeking for transfers to

other similar institutions in places that are relatively peaceful. This has greatly affected the number of student's intake to the institution.

In another finding that directly affected education is the abduction of schoolgirls in one of the study areas. A staff of Government Girls Technical College Dapchi who witnessed the unfortunate incidence of 2018, narrated how no fewer than 110 female students were kidnapped from their school hostels. "Although, most of the kidnapped schoolgirls were later released from captivity, it is one tragic incidence that I will never forget in life that have enormous impact on education". A lot of the kidnapped girls have either abandoned schooling or married up after their release while few had to seek for transfers to other schools to avoid the repeat of the ugly development. This finding is consistent with Muhammad & Mohammed (2019) who reported that impact of the insurgency led to poor school enrolment, destruction of educational infrastructure and increased psychological pressure on the performance of teachers.

Recommendations

On the basis of information from informants in respect of the research questions, it is evident that the Boko Haram insurgency has had a devastating economic, educational and health impact on the people of northern Yobe State. For this reason, the study recommends as follows;

1. Geographically, the northern Yobe shares international border with Niger republic. This provided means of livelihood to millions as cross-border trade flourishes. However, since the beginning of the insurgency, this means of livelihood that most residents of the area depend on for survival, is almost grounded due to the activities of the insurgents. To mitigate this effect, this

study recommends more proactive security measures to effectively patrol not only major roads but also on market places throughout the area. This will not only ensure free movement of goods and services across the region, but also peace and security thereby providing employment opportunities.

2. As revealed by the findings of the study, the entrepreneurship development complex in one of the tertiary institutions in the area was destroyed by the insurgents. The study recommends as a matter of urgency, the renovation of the entrepreneurship complex to continue on its mandate of providing skills to our teeming youths and women who constituted significant of part of the vulnerable population to make them self-reliant. It is hoped that when the complex is renovated, it will greatly reduce the burden upon government to provide employment opportunities.
3. Health is said to be wealth and without health, no any meaningful development can ever take place. It evident from the findings of the study that the health sector of the study area had its severe share of destruction inflicted by the insurgents. Therefore, it is recommended as a way of mitigating the effects, to while renovating and or upgrading the shattered health facilities in the area, to equally deploy more health care personnel and increased hospital consumables to enhance health care delivery in the affected region.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of Boko Haram insurgency in Northern Yobe State. The study was designed to explore

the socio-economic impact with specific focus on economic, education and health sectors of the affected region. The findings of the study have contributed to existing literature on the impact of Boko Haram insurgency from the perspective of Northern Yobe State which generally considered as one of the most affected areas in the north east of the country.

Findings of the research shows that northern Yobe State and its residents have suffered and are yet to fully recover, economically, educationally and health wise, as a result of the activities of Boko Haram insurgents.

In line with the findings of the study, several suggestions are made on how the victims of the insurgency can be provided with effective measures in terms of legislations and interventions to help them recover from the enormous losses incurred as a result of the insurgency that affected the region.

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