



## EFFECTS OF INSECURITY AND CHALLENGES ON FEMALES' EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Concerned about the possible adverse effects insecurity and its attendant challenges might have on Nigeria's goal of enhancing females' education throughout the country, the paper investigated the effects of insecurity on females' education in Nigeria. Using secondary data, the paper identified the diverse manifestations of insecurity in different geo-political zones in the country, and established some criteria to select which of the manifestations to study. Boko-Haram insurgences in the Northeastern Nigeria best met the set criteria. The study revealed that Boko Haram, that classified education a 'forbidden thing' has tried vigorously to eradicate Western education in the region: hundreds of teachers have been killed; thousands of students have either been killed or wounded; hundreds of schools have been damaged and/ or burnt; hundreds of female students have been kidnapped in their various hostels and on their ways to and from school; female teenage hostages have been turned suicide bombers; parents have been forced to keep their daughters away from schools, majority of which have been forced to close down for more than two years. The paper concluded that females' education in the region, that ranked least before the insurgences, have been worsened by the insurgences. Strategies were provided to enhance females' education in the region, to maximize the invaluable contributions of the citizens in this region. .*

**Keywords:** *Boko-Haram, Insecurity, Female education, Northeastern Nigeria.*

### INTRODUCTION

Despite ample documentation of 'security' as a very vital ingredient for development in the literature (Abubakar, 2004; Ezeoba, 2011; Oyebode, 2011), insecurity is a major challenge confronting humanity today. Challenges of insecurity is so pervasive that it dominates the news items in every mass communication media throughout the world. For instance, the whole of the Arab world has known no peace since the Al-Qaida group led by Osama Bin Ladin bombed the United States of America's World Trade Centre on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2001, wars and threats of wars are common features in most of the developing nations of the world. The pervading threats of wars are not limited to international level but also manifests in various forms of intra-national wars.

Although insecurity has manifested in Nigeria since the colonial era, reaching a very high pitch during the nation's civil war between 1967 and 1970, the level of insecurity being experienced in the country since 1999 is not only unprecedented in the history of the nation, but takes diverse forms. For example, in Southwestern Nigeria, insecurity manifests in form of armed robbery, kidnapping for rituals, communal clashes and armed struggles between members of the National Union of Road Transports Workers (NURTW). In the South-south and Southeast regions, insecurity manifests in form of oil bunkering, pipe-line vandalization, kidnapping for ransom, communal clashes and armed struggles for political independence (via Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra [MASSOB]). Insecurity in the three northern regions of the country manifests mostly in form of ethno-religious clashes, the most prominent of which is the activities of a religious fundamentalist group generally known as 'Boko Haram' (Western Education is forbidden).

Insecurity has become so topical an issue in Nigeria that it has generated a lot of empirical investigations chronicling the various atrocities perpetuated under its diverse manifestations (Omede, 2011; Shettima, 2012; Joda & Abdulrasheed, 2015). A major issue that has not been given adequate attention in the existing literature is the diverse challenges insecurity poses to



females' education in the country. This is a major gap in knowledge the present study set out to fill. Filling this salient gap in knowledge is very important in identifying the extent to which insecurity has contributed to truncating the nation's drive to achieve the United Nations' Millennium goal of achieving Education for All by the year 2015. The study also aspires to provide knowledge-based inputs for streamlining educational programmes for the nation to ensure that quality education is provided for all, irrespective of gender, in the nearest possible future.

The study relied on secondary data obtained from published and unpublished sources. Realizing the fact that all forms of manifestations of insecurity in every section of the nation could not be adequately reviewed in this study, the researcher established some criteria to guide in picking the manifestation and area of the nation to be covered by the study. The criteria set were: the duration of the occurrence of the manifestation; persistence and severity of the attendant insecurity; level of carnage and attendant violence; and, level of internationalization of the attendant violence and insecurity. The activities of the Islamic fundamentalist group popularly known as 'Boko Haram' in the Northeastern geopolitical zone of the nation best meet all set criteria for the study, and was thus purposively selected. For instance, existing evidence affirms that the sect's insurgency has been more affirmed in the Northeastern region of the country since 2009 (Ovuorie, 2015), the sect has kidnapped hundreds of females either on their way to school or in their hostels (Joda & Abdulrasheed, 2015). The study thus focuses on the effects of Boko Haram on females' education in Northeastern Nigeria, comprising six states: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe.

## **CONCEPTUALIZATION AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **CONCEPTUALIZATION**

For better comprehension of the contents of this study, it is important we start by clarifying our conceptualization of some concepts as applied in this study. Prominent among these concepts are: 'security', 'insecurity' and 'education related violations'.

#### **Concept of Security**

Security, especially in the form of 'feeling secured', has been identified as a 'fundamental need' in the literature (Ullman, 1983; Campbell, 1998; Microsoft Encarta Dictionary, 2008; Wikipedia, 2013). Diverse definitions of 'security' exist in the literature, for instance, while Omede (2012) sees security as a dynamic condition which involves the relative ability of a state to counter threats to its core values and interests, Nwolise (2006) perceives security as an all-encompassing condition which suggests that a territory must be secured by a network of armed forces; that the sovereignty of the state must be guaranteed by a democratic and patriotic government, which in turn must be protected by the military, police and the people themselves; that the people must not only be protected from external attacks but also from devastating consequences of internal upheavals such as unemployment, hunger, starvation, diseases, ignorance, homelessness, environmental degradation and pollution cum socio-economic injustices. While the two conceptualizations of security are more concerned about the administrative framework, Microsoft Encarta Dictionary (2008) provides a definition that takes cognizance of the citizens' perception of security, and defines security as "the state of being safe and protected; the assurance that something of value, e.g. job, will not be taken away; something that provides a sense of protection against loss, attack, or harm; and, precautions taken to keep something safe from crime, attack, or danger, e.g. security measures'.

#### **Concept of Insecurity**

Like security, insecurity has been conceptualized from both state (Hausler, Urban & McCorquodale, 2012) and individual (Oxford Dictionary, 2013) perspectives. Of the diverse



definitions and conceptualizations existing in the literature, the one adopted as being most relevant for this study is the second of the two definitions provided by the Oxford Dictionary (2013) where insecurity is defined as “vulnerability, defenselessness, unguardedness, lack of protection, perilousness, peril, danger, riskiness; instability, fragility, frailty, shakiness, rockiness, unsteadiness, unreliability, tenuousness’ as used in statements like ‘*we were conscious of the insecurity of our situation*’”. In this study, insecurity is thus perceived and conceptualized as the sense of vulnerability, defenselessness, lack of protection and danger present in the study area, influencing females’ participation in education programmes.

### **Education-Related Violations**

Education-related violations are defined by Hausler, Urban and McCorquodale (2012) as the *legal aspects* of attacks against education during situations of insecurity and armed conflict. An attack on education refers to an act against education, students and education staff, and educational facilities.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Violence in schools has been studied in diverse ways in the literature. For instance, in most sub-Saharan African countries, violence in schools has been studied at the state level, especially where the state uses its repressive mechanisms to quell student rioters and put student leaders in prison under torture (O’Malley 2007). On the other hand, in Middle Eastern countries such as Iran and Palestine, focus has been on attacks on educators as well as how wars can stop children from getting an education (O’Malley 2007). For example in countries like Afghanistan and Palestine, statistics have recounted numbers of teachers killed as a result of violent conflict and abductions (Human Rights Watch 2006). In North America and Europe, the interest in schools and insecurity has mostly been directed at war-torn countries like Afghanistan, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Iraq. In these countries, O’Malley writes, “schools, places that should be safe for children, have increasingly become the prime target of attacks by armed parties” (2007, 7).

Insecurity has been identified as being an anathema to education patronage and development. (Hausler, Urban & McCorquodale, 2011; The World Bank, 2011; Abdulrasheed, Onuselogu & Obioma, 2015) as neighbourhood become insecure (Abdulrasheed, Onuselogu & Obioma, 2015); and schools and colleges are looted, destroyed and abandoned, teachers assassinated, scholars threatened, and students recruited as child soldiers (Hausler, Urban & McCorquodale, 2012; Jones & Naylor, 2014). The 2011 World Bank Development Report found that people in fragile and conflict-affected states are more than three times as likely to be unable to send their children to school as those in other developing countries.

Access to education has been identified as the panacea to the ‘persistent challenges of insecurity facing Nigeria’ (Ndoma-Egba, 2014). In the same vein, falling education coupled with illiteracy have been identified as the main cause of insecurity in the northeastern part of Nigeria (Asaolu, 2012; 2015, Murray-Bruce, 2013). Although Nigeria has the world’s worst record of having some 10 million children out of school, with nine out of these ten millions coming from the North (Nyesom Wike quoted in Naij.com, 2015), data on prevailing literacy level in Northeastern Nigeria suggest that basic education has been experiencing serious problems in the region before the insurgences. For instance, basic education in Borno State were shown to had shortage of classes for teaching and learning, shortage of instructional materials and teachers (NUT, 2007); teachers’ salaries were not paid, leading to frequent strike by basic school teachers (NUT, 2008).

As at 2013, Yobe and Borno have the highest illiteracy levels in the country. A whopping 83.3% of boys over 6 and adult men in Yobe state have no formal Western education. The figure for Borno which is number two on the list is 63.6%. The data from Afri-Dev is proof positive that



the only sustainable way to fight insecurity in Nigeria is through education not guns and bombs (Murray-Bruce, 2013).

It is rather pathetic to observe that the northeastern region of Nigeria that has the highest level of illiteracy, and requires the highest level of encouragement to boost literacy level among its citizens, is the epicenter of Boko-Haram insurgency. The insurgency and its attendant insecurity have recorded adverse effects on education of the citizens of the region in general. Adverse effects of the insecurity on females' education in the region is the main focus of the present study, and forms the main focus of the next section of this paper.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF INSECURITY ON FEMALES EDUCATION**

Diverse effects of insecurity caused by the Boko-Haram insurgences on females' education in Northeastern Nigeria abound in the literature. Joda and Abdulrasheed (2015), in their study on the effects of the insurgency on girls' education in most of the affected states in Northeastern Nigeria, provides a gory picture. The study reveals that:

- The insurgent attacks have affected the girls' education through mindless attacks on their schools.
- Frequent abduction of school girls in their dormitory, occasional kidnapping of school girls on their way to school have reduce their attendance in schools drastically (more than 1,000 female students have thus been kidnapped).
- Most teachers and school heads in the region are among the internally displaced persons.
- Female teachers and school girls were traumatize, and afraid of going to their schools on fear of attacks from insurgents.
- Educational planners and inspectors of girls education programme can't conduct periodic checking on schools as most education officers in the region were currently out of their states.

The resultant closure of schools have exacerbated the previous poor rating of the region in terms of access to education. For instance, existing data revealed that the region has Nigeria's worst girl-child education (Ovuorie, 2015). National Population Commission (2014) documented that the Northeast region rates among the lowest on almost all the formal education indicators. Its rates of attendance, from pre-primary school to junior secondary school (JSS), are very low; female primary completion and literacy rates are also much lower than the national average. As at 2014, existing evidence revealed that 70% of Northerners are illiterates, while ten million Nigerian children are currently out of school (Atiku Abubaker, 2015; Gbajamiamila, 2014). As a result of insecurity, school enrolment in the region has gone down by 28 percent more than any other region in the country (Bwala, 2012). According to the Nigerian Education Data Survey (NEDS, as cited in Saleh, 2011), constant attacks makes it even harder for teachers and other stakeholders to persuade parents to allow their children stay on at school. The insurgency has been observed to undermine the educational progress of Northern Nigeria (Ogbebo, 2014; Garba, 2015).

The effects of the insurgency in Northeastern Nigeria have been recorded in terms of over one millions people that have been displaced (NEMA, 2015); children that now live in perpetual fears (Olugbode, 2015); high incidence of children dropping out of school (Abdullahi & Terhemba, 2014), and congestion in classrooms where schools open. Obiajuru (2015) reported a case of 2,000 students crammed inside two classrooms in Bauchi. Borno State Ministry of Education (BSMOE, 2015) documented that many basic schools in Borno State had experienced several attacks from the insurgent group, and that some basic schools, especially in Baga towns in northern part of the State, have been closed down for 2 years.

According to the figures released by the Amnesty International (2014), education is under attack in Northeast Nigeria: many teachers and over 1,000 school children have been killed or wounded; about 50 schools have either been burned or seriously damaged and more than 60



others have been forced to close. Since the beginning of 2012, about 70 Thousands of children have been forced out of schools across communities in Yobe, Kaduna, Adamawa and Borno states. Many teachers have been forced to flee for their safety to other states. The highest number of attacks was in Borno state in the Northeast. According to the Nigeria teachers' union, more than 1000 teachers have been forced to flee from areas in the north since 2012.

UNICEF (2015) reports paints a gory picture of the negative consequences of the Boko Haram insurgence on females' education in Northeastern Nigeria. In the report, it is documented that because of the security challenges, numerous children currently have no access to education in parts of the north, particularly in the northeast. The document emphasizes that schools have been closed for security reasons, and where schools in the affected areas still function, children and teachers are often afraid to attend. In comparatively safe areas in the northeast, schools are often overcrowded, understaffed and have insufficient teaching materials; and that because of the violence, many parents are unwilling to enroll their daughters or are withdrawing those already in school.

The resultant effects of the Boko Haram insurgences on females' education in the region is that females' education in the area that have consistently been far below the nation's average has now nose-dived for worse. With the insurgents targeting females for kidnapping to use as human shields and ready tools to carry out their heinous criminal suicide bombs, females in the region might be educationally handicapped in contributing their maximum quota to the nation's development.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

Importance of females' education hinges on the fact that mothers are the first and closest teachers of children that later become adults and national leaders. Hence the generally accepted belief that if you educate a woman, you educate a nation. It is therefore rather saddening to observe that majority of females in the Northeastern Nigeria are not only not educated, but are currently being denied possibility of being educated, thereby limiting their possible contributions to national development. There is therefore the need to, as a matter of urgency, strive to provide enabling environment to arrest the existing challenges to females' education in Nigeria in general, and Northeastern Nigeria in particular.

Since the insurgence by the Boko Haram group is the immediate cause of the exacerbation of insecurity and females' poor access to education in the region, it is strongly suggested that concerted efforts should be made by the government to end the activities of the sect in the region to pave ways for meaningful development of the area.

Mass education should be seen as the main tool for empowering the citizenry in general and the females in particular in the region. To this end, the various levels of governments in the region should be encouraged to embark on mass education (not literacy) programmes. Adequate funds should be provided for this important education suggested. Since Borno State has been accused of not giving basic education the required attention in the state, the federal government and international communities should ensure the government in the region give education the required attention. This is very important as education has been identified as a reliable tool to prevent possible re-occurrence of other similar group in the future. For instance, Murray-Bruce (2013) attributed the failure of the Boko Haram group to penetrate Kano State that served as the headquarter of similar (Maitasine) group in early 1980s to mass education that was introduced in Kano state. Mass education has also been identified as the useful tool in curbing kidnapping for ransom that was very rampant in Anambra state (Murray-Bruce, 2013).

To provide committed teachers required for the success of the mass education programme to be introduced in the region and the whole of Northern regions in general, the state governments should make adequate allocations for the education sector, pay teachers live-able wages





promptly, and put an end to the practice of employing non-indigenes on part-time contractual bases. No Nigerian should be employed as casual teachers in any part of the nation on the basis of his or her not being an indigene of the state in which he or she decides to reside and work.

It is strongly believed that adopting the various strategies above will enhance the nation's realization of the nation's new vision for 2030, where majority of the citizenry, particularly those from the present turbulent Northeastern region, will be able to contribute their individual and collective best to the nation's development.

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