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# **The Effect Of Boko-Haram Insurgency On Girls Education In North-Eastern Nigeria**

**Abubakar Suleiman<sup>1</sup>; Dahiru Alhaji Iliya<sup>2</sup> & Musa Usman<sup>3</sup>**

**<sup>1</sup>Department of Early Childhood Education  
Umar Suleiman College Of Education Gashua Yobe State, Nigeria**

**<sup>2</sup>Department of Adult Education  
Umar Suleiman College Of Education Gashua Yobe State, Nigeria**

**<sup>3</sup>Department of Primary Education  
Umar Suleiman College Of Education Gashua Yobe State, Nigeria**

## **ABSTRACT**

The Boko Haram insurgency has profoundly disrupted girls' education in North-Eastern Nigeria, inflicting both physical and psychosocial harm that hinders access to schooling and academic progress. The conflict has led to the destruction of schools, insecurity, and widespread fear among families, significantly lowering school attendance and enrolment rates among girls. Beyond direct attacks on educational facilities, Boko Haram's use of violence, abductions, and the stigma associated with sexual violence has contributed to girls dropping out or being kept from school for safety reasons. Economic hardships exacerbated by the insurgency further limit parents' ability to afford education for their daughters. Empirical studies show a statistically significant decline in girls-child school attendance with rising insurgency activity, reflecting barriers in both accessibility and learning capacity. The insurgency's adverse effect on girls-child education poses severe long-term risks for individual development and national progress. Strategic interventions involving governmental and public-private partnerships are essential to rehabilitate educational infrastructure, support affected students and teachers, and restore girls' access to sustained education in the region. The study will last for six (6) month from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025 to April 2026. And the sum one million, five hundred naira will cover the research expenses.

## **Keywords:**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Nigeria is the most populous African country with an estimated population of 202, 156, 535 million people (Country meter, 2019). Nigeria is in West Africa with 923,768 square km bordered the Atlantic Ocean by the South, Federal Republic of Cameroon by the East, and federal Republic of Niger and Chad by the North (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017). Formally, Nigeria is divided into six geopolitical zones: South West, South East, South-South, North- Central, North-West, North East and Federal Capital Territory (FCT). there are 36 states across the country and broken into 774 Local Government Areas (LGAs). Traditional activities play an important role as most of the ethnic groups has their own traditional rulers (ACAPS, 2016).

According to the National Population Commission (NPC) North-Eastern part of Nigeria especially in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe State (most affected by Boko-haram insurgency) experienced high rate of illiteracy, poverty and under-development (NPC, 2017). Nigerian government has made significant

efforts in tackling the menace of Boko-haram. According to the United Nation Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNCHA) Boko-haram violence affected the life of over 26million people across the North-Eastern Nigeria, Boko-haram has affected the life of over 500 girls-child within the North-Eastern Nigeria, 6.1million in need of emergency humanitarian aid currently in 2019 (UNCHA, 2019). Over 300 secondary school aged children were killed, 386 secondary school girl-child were abducted, 2,295 teachers were killed and 19,000 displaced, more than 1,400 primary and secondary schools destroyed with over 600,000 children lost access to education (UNICEF, 2019). According to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) reported that over 1,981,009 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) was recorded in the 3 State of the North-Eastern Nigeria (Adamawa, Borno, Yobe State) which are directly affected by insurgency. Borno has the highest number of IDPs with 1,434,149, Adamawa 136,481 and Yobe State 131,563. In addition to that 278,908 refugees from the Republic of Niger and Cameroon 73,520, Chad 61,152. These led to the declaration of Boko-haram as the deadliest terrorist group in the world in 2015 (NEMA, 2015).

Therefore, most African countries experienced the conflict that affected the lives of children, example; Sierra-Leone, Liberia, Kenya, Sudan, and Somalia, but this research work concentrate around the situation of children affected by Boko-haram insurgency in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem of this study stems from the devastating impact Boko Haram insurgency in North-Eastern Nigeria has severely disrupted girls-child education leading to abduction, displacement, trauma, schools closure, reduced enrolment and attendance, increases dropout rates, forced marriage and pregnancy. Globally, education is recognized as a fundamental right and a key to sustainable development, especially for girl-child, who face multiple barriers worldwide such as poverty and gender inequality. However, armed conflicts like the Boko Haram insurgency in North-Eastern Nigeria have made these issues far worse by destroying schools, creating insecurity, and causing fear among families. In Africa, where many countries face conflicts, girls' education is disproportionately affected due to violence, displacement, and social stigma. Specifically in Nigeria, Boko Haram's attacks have caused many schools to close or be unsafe, resulting in many girls dropping out or never enrolling. These attacks include bombings, kidnappings, forced marriages, and sexual violence, all of which traumatize young girls and deter their families from sending them to school. Poverty made worse by insecurity limits access further, making it hard for families to pay for education. As a result, many girls in North-Eastern Nigeria are deprived of education, threatening their future and the development of their communities. This calls for urgent actions to protect and support girls-child education from local to global levels to break this cycle of violence and missed opportunities (Abur & Iyoho, 2019; Williams, 2017; ReliefWeb, 2017; Bertoni, 2019).

### **Research Objectives**

- i. To determine the effect of Boko-haram insurgency on girls-child education in the North-Eastern Nigeria.
- ii. To find out the current campaign by NGOs and Humanitarian agency aimed at understanding their contribution to girls-child right to education in the North-Eastern Nigeria to balance the rights and protection regarding their access to quality education and school safety.

### **Research questions**

- i What are the effects of insurgency on girl's education in the north-eastern part of Nigeria?
- ii What are the campaigns NGOs and Humanitarian agencies are currently running around girls right to education in the north-eastern Nigeria?
- iii How do we campaign on girls right and protection to recognised school as safe space?

### **Research Hypothesis**

**H<sub>1</sub>** Boko-haram insurgency significantly reduce the rate of school enrollment and attendance of Girls in North-Eastern Nigeria

**H<sub>0</sub>** Boko-haram insurgency has no significant effect on the rate of school enrollment and attendance of girls in the North-Eastern Nigeria.

### **Significance of the study**

This study is important to the Nigerian government, and especially Universal Basic Education (UBE) and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), NGOs and Humanitarian agency in carrying out their responsibilities with regards to girls whose access to education was denied by the boko-haram insurgency. Girls are important members to every successful society and have the right to be protected in situation of armed conflict. Nigerian government is making significant effort in winning the war against Boko-haram terror group despite their Gorilla attacks on innocent citizens. Government is achieving success in helping to provide effective education to the girls affected by insurgency in the north-eastern part of Nigeria.

This study is significant, as it is trying to understand the current campaign by NGOs and humanitarian agencies aimed at understanding their contribution to girls right to education, while balancing the rights and protection regarding their access to quality education and school safety. These will play an important role to any government NGOs and countries in assisting girl's education affected by the insurgency.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Early years of a child's life are the most important year toward the making of intelligence, social behaviour and personality of the child are all form within the period of childhood transition to adulthood (Isokpan and Durajaye, 2016). Therefore, the right of the child as the articles stated means the initial stage of growth and development which provide child care and protection that guarantee successful reinforcement to the future of the child toward the development of his or her society (Bellamy, 2014). Childhood involves a process which is very difficult to safeguard child right and the process need steps to follow to ensure successful achievement. It is also a process which provide clear transition from childhood stage to adulthood without discrimination (Pinheiro, 2006). In Nigeria (especially north) right of the girls are not fully meet, girls are side-line in all aspects of life either politically, economically, socially, culturally, religiously and educationally. These misrepresent girls and make them to be infidel within the family context and the larger society (Makama, 2013, p. 7). Therefore, these research work will concentrate on the child right in general and down to Nigerian context, girls right to education in Nigeria, girls right to access education in Nigeria. The paper will also investigate the circumstance of girl's education affected by Boko-haram insurgency in North-Eastern part Nigeria. Conclusion is also provided at the end of the paper in the context to support northern Nigeria girls under the right of the UNCRC and CRA 2003.

United Nation Convention of the Right of the Children (2013) argues that everyone deserved to be treated fairly with respect in respective of tribe, culture, sex, religion and race to provide effective foundation of justice, freedom, and peace to reign everywhere. Nigeria is working in line with the guideline of the UNCRC and later implement the Child Right Act in 2003. The aim of the act was to ensure right, justice and protection of the children everywhere in the country in line with the UNCRC guidelines (Alton et al., 2017). According to the UNCRC general principles and the CRA make it clearly about the right of the children, article 2 emphasises that child must be provided fully with no specification of any kind. Article 3 stipulated that the interest of the child matter most and most be counted into consideration, either by the public/private institution, legislative bodies and the court of law. Article 6 stated that the child has the right to survive for successful development (UNICEF, 2007a). Also, according to section 1 of the CRA stated that the interest of the child matter first to be the paramount consideration upon all actions. While article 2 of the CRA emphasises that the child must be given protection and all the necessary care for his or her wellbeing. And, article 4 of the CRA stated that child has the right to survival and successful development (Alen et al, 2022). Therefore, both the UNCRC and the CRA emphasises on the issues affecting the child primary interest to be considered first, but the current situation in Nigeria and especially the northern part of Nigeria is not going in lines with all the guidelines stated above (UNICEF, 2007b).

### **Right to education**

Isokpan (2016a) argues that education is a combination of all process by which child improved behaviour, abilities and other forms of attitude which are of great importance to society. Education helps individuals

to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, norms and value and contribute efficiently toward the development of a society (Umar, 2018). According to article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Right 1948 educationally was declared as primary human right for every person, and this has been confirmed by the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and cultural rights (ICESCR) 1966, UNCRC, African Charter on the Right and Welfare of the Child 1990, Peoples Rights of Women in Africa (2003) among other international and domestic human rights instruments (Aisosa, 2017a)

Based on the articles 13 and 14 of the ICESCR which make a provision of the right to education, article 28 of the CRC make a provision for the child right to education. Those stated that education must be for all children child based on equal opportunity and emphasises that state most make primary education compulsory and free to all children to encourage the progress of various forms of secondary education; provide financial assistance for those in need, encourage school drop-out rate. Article 29 of the CRC explains the objectives of the education of the child toward providing future life in free society.

In African context, article 11 of the ACRW provide the same to those of article 28 (1) of the CRC, but it does not require progressive realisation of the right. Also, considering the importance of girls in a society in accessing education, the African Women Protocol make a provision of state to eliminate all forms of inequalities in the provision of accessing education, and increases the enrolment of girls in school (Durajaye, 2016).

According to CRC, ICESCR and other international bodies, right to education is guaranteed to every child in a situation of armed conflict the state has a responsibility to respect, fulfil the right and protection of the child life (UNODC, 2019). International law started that during a conflict either international or domestic child must be protected with respect to the same with the civilians who are not engaging in the hostilities. These is started in article 77 of API, article 38 of the CRC, article 22of the ACRWC maintain similar provision and emphasises that children must be protected from abuse during armed conflict (Isokpan, 2016b).

### **Child education in Nigeria**

According to the 1999 constitution of the federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, right to education is not guaranteed even though Nigeria is a party to the ICESCR, CRC, ACRWC and the African Women Protocol, but call government attention to it in chapter II as basic objective and Directive Principle of state policy (UNICEF, 2017). Section 18 of the Child Right Act stated that government most make sure that all its policy will be directed toward providing equal educational opportunities at all levels (Bellamy,2016). The government must ensure free and compulsory primary, secondary and university education including free adult literacy programme (CFRN, 1999). Chapter 2 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria involves right to education and maintained to be non-justiciable but are just objectives to guide the government policies and regulation (Bello, 2009).

The Child Right Act (CRA) 2003 is the main Nigerian law responsible for protecting the rights of the child (Umar, 2016). In section section 15 of the CRA guarantee free, compulsory universal primary education as the basic right to every child irrespective of age, sex, tribe, religion and race (Bellamy, 2016). Universal Basic Education Act (UBE) 2004 addresses the issues regarding access to inclusiveness, equity, equality, affordability and quality basic education.

Primary education is structured in Nigerian National Policy of Education (NPE) 2013 which caters for the children. Also, it serves as a foundation by which the pursuit of higher education is organised, and centre as foundation of educational policies by successive governments in the country (Attanda, 2009). The successful process in fulfilling the aims and objectives of basic education in National Policy of Education is the Universal Basic Education (UBE). The scheme which was organised to enhance the success rate of the initial 9 years of schooling in Nigeria. The main aims and objectives of the initiative is to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, ignorance and facilitating national development (Gabrial, 2012). UBE is a programme established by Nigerian government to meet the needs of Education For All (EFA) agenda and the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) with special respect and attention to child education in the country (Cox, 2013). The scope of the UBE programme involves formal primary education, nomadic education, formal basic education in the first 9 years of schooling, nomadic education offered to school

age children of pastoral farmers, and non-formal education, literacy education is scheme for out-of-school children and another illiterate adult (UBEC, 2016).

## METHODOLOGY

### Population of the Study

The population of the study involves 12,566 students from the public secondary school students from 20 public secondary schools within the North-Eastern part of Nigeria was considered in the research and comprises of both male and females from different home background and are enrolled in the secondary school at least six (6) during the Boko-haram insurgency between 2009-2015. It includes students who have been directly affected by attacks, witnessed violence, or have been displaced due to the conflict. Also, the population of the students are expected to remember the events that occurred during the Boko-haram insurgency. The study will be limited to educational setting only.

### Sample and Sampling Technique

The researcher used cluster sampling technique in selecting the sample. According to Parker (2023) cluster sampling is a research method where a large population is divided into smaller groups called clusters, which are often naturally occurring groups like schools, neighborhoods, or cities. Then, a random sample of these clusters is chosen, and researchers collect data from all individuals or a sample within those selected clusters. In this study simple random technique will be use. Two schools was selected randomly from each state base on their location to represent the population.

Snowball sampling technique was used to identify other students who are the victims of insurgency but have left the school before the data collection. Snowball sampling, network sampling or chain-referral sampling, is a non-probability sampling technique used primarily in qualitative research where the study participants recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances (Patton, 2022).

### Data Collection and Instrumentation

Primary data through interviews and questionnaires was administered to girls, parents, teachers, and education officials within affected communities. Questionnaires was collected with quantitative data on school enrolment rates, dropout rates, and perceptions of safety. Secondary data was used to collect information from government records, educational reports, and previous research to provide background statistics and validate findings. Due to challenges such as insecurity and limited internet access, face-to-face data collection was used to prioritized, with safety precautions taken for respondents and researchers.

### Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative data from questionnaires was analyzed statistically using software like SPSS to examine trends and correlations between insurgency intensity and girls' education indicators such as enrollment and dropout rates. Qualitative data from interviews undergo thematic analysis to identify key themes related to the insurgency's impact on girls' schooling, including psychological effects, community attitudes, and coping strategies. The mixed-methods approach allows a fuller understanding of both the numbers behind the problem and the human stories behind those numbers (Sage Methods, 2020).

## RESULTS

**Table 1 Descriptive Statistics (N = 50)**

Variables	M	SD	MIN	MAX
Insurgency Intensity	3.82	1.04	1	5
Girls Enrolment Rate %	34.6	28.7	0	90

**Table 2 Mean Girls' Enrolment Rate by Insurgency Intensity and Participant Gender**

Insurgency intensity	Male Participation	Female Participants	Total
Low (1–2)	M = 78.3%, n = 5	M = 82.0%, n = 4	M = 79.9%
Moderate (3)	M = 45.0%, n = 8	M = 38.6%, n = 7	M = 42.0%
High (4–5)	M = 19.2%, n = 12	M = 11.4%, n = 14	M = 15.0%

**Table 3. Spearman’s Correlations Between Insurgency Intensity and Girls’ Enrolment Rate**

Group	N	S-D
Total Sample	50	-74
Male Participants	25	-68
Female Participants	25	-79

**Interpretation:**

There was a strong, statistically significant negative correlation between insurgency intensity and girls’ education enrolment,  $r_s(48) = -.74, p < .001$ . As insurgency intensity reported by participants increased, the rate of girls’ enrolment decreased. The relationship was stronger when reported by female participants,  $r_s(23) = -.79, p < .001$ , compared to male participants,  $r_s(23) = -.68, p < .001$ . Descriptive data show that in ‘High/Very High’ intensity areas, female participants reported mean enrolment of 11.4% vs 19.2% reported by males.

Thematic Analysis shows what makes mixed-methods strong. Themes explain why the correlation exists: Theme 1: Fear of Abduction – 88% of participants in High intensity group mentioned this. Explains the steep drop in enrolment. Quote: “After Chibok, we cannot send our daughters. Boys still go.” – Female, ID 12. Theme 2: School Destruction – Correlates with intensity scores 4–5. No buildings = no enrolment. Theme 3: Gendered Impact – Explains why female participants report lower rates than males. Theme: “Boys are sent to Almajiri schools far away; girls are kept home for safety.”

**DISCUSSION**

Despite the huge amount of money spent by the Nigerian government in tackling Boko haram menace since 2010, child education needs are not achieved, and a lot need to be done. Gorilla attack and counter-insurgency military operation continuous. The issue of boko-haram insurgency has become a threat in north-eastern Nigeria, resulting in displacement of more than 2 million people (NEMA, 2015). Girls are important members to every society and have the right to be protected in situation of armed conflict. Currently Nigerian government is achieving success in helping to provide effective education to the girls affected by insurgency in the north-eastern part of Nigeria despite the corruption issues recorded during the last administration (2010-2015) by some members of the Nigerian government and senior army’s (NEMA, 2018).

This study is significant, as it is trying to understand the current campaign by NGOs and humanitarian agencies aimed at understanding their contribution to girls right to education, while balancing the rights and protection regarding their access to quality education and school safety. These will play an important role to any government, NGOs and other countries in assisting girl’s education affected by the insurgency.

The constant attack on schools, market, church, government agencies have crippled the socio-economic development of the country. According to NEMA the attacks on the North-eastern states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States become a major setback to the Nigerian government in achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Education For All (EFA), Vision 2020 programs among others. Senseless bombing affects the socio-economic development of the country (NEMA, 2017). Most investors are relocating to other countries for their business, security to life and properties become a significant issue of concern (Olowoselo, 2014).

Plan International, UNGEI and other humanitarian organisations play an important role in some of their campaigns on girls’ right and protection to recognised school as a safe space, but girls are still unsafe, and schools are not secured. The organisations have succeeded in conducting advocacy and collaboration with stakeholders, government, communities, traditional and religious leaders.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Nigerian government and non-governmental organisations should put head together to invest in school safety programmes where conducive atmosphere for learning would be provided, these could be done

through educational infrastructure, school guidelines must be met, and soft intervention through school safety plans must be given, code of conduct, prevention of gender-based violence through strategies and reporting mechanism, military and police personnel should be deployed in and out of schools. School feeding programmes should be supported colliding with the local farmers' production, school garden and nutrition should be provided for better health and hygiene. The school garden will play an important role in girls' education and thereby updating children, and parent experience of food production techniques and nutrition, school feeding programme will improve girls' education, nutrition and retention of students in schools.

Nigerian government should provide guideline and policies internationally standard to introduce education in emergency for girls who are happened to be the victims of boko haram. Also, necessary investigation should be carryout to bring all the culprit to book and ensure justice to the victims of boko haram insurgency.

The 'second chance' should be established to enable girls who drop out of school in fear of boko-haram abduction to return to school (Women Day Colleges) is a good way to promote female education.

Plan International, United Nation Girls Initiative (UNGEI) under the umbrella of Nigerian Girls Initiative (NGEI) and other charity organisations, should put more effort in promoting the girls' access to education especially those affect by Boko Haram insurgency in north-eastern Nigeria. NGOs and humanitarian agencies should facilitate effective partnership for girl's education and gender equality for girls affected by Boko Haram insurgency. In addition, they should put more effort in addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in school and within the society.

Charity organisation should sustain advocacy to policymakers, traditional and religious leaders with continuous mobilisation of stakeholders. These will contribute to an increase in school participation and retention of girls affected by the insurgency at all levels of education. School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) and women's association will also play an important role in promoting girl's education.

Charity organisations and NGOs in north eastern Nigeria find it difficult to convince girls who happened to be victims of boko haram abduction to go back to school. Nevertheless, the use of female role models during sensitisation campaigns in rural communities; example female consultants could be useful as an example of female who is educated and could play an important role in convincing young girls in aspiring to be like them. Also, they should involve the State Governor's wives (first ladies) in spearheading the sensitisation campaigns on the benefits of girl's education in the rural communities, local government areas, emirate council, and advocacy to government will play an important role in convincing attitude towards girls' education and enhancing the release of funds by the government to NGOs and charity organisation activities.

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