



The Role of Education in Post-Conflict Recovery in Yobe State, North Eastern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the role of education in post-conflict recovery in Yobe State, Northeastern Nigeria. Guided by three objectives and grounded in Human Capital Theory and Social Reconstruction Theory, a mixed-methods design was employed. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula, 384 participants including teachers, parents, students, community leaders, and education officials, were selected from Geidam, Damaturu, and Gujba local government areas. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Results indicated that conflict led to extensive school destruction, teacher displacement, and significant learning loss. Conversely, education aided recovery by offering safe spaces for psychosocial healing, promoting peace education, rebuilding community dialogue, and reducing youth susceptibility to extremist recruitment. The study concludes that increased government funding for school rehabilitation and teacher recruitment, alongside systematic integration of peace education and psychosocial support into curricula, are the most critical strategies. It recommends that the Yobe State Government substantially boost post-conflict education funding, and that the State Ministry of Education mandate peace education across all affected local government areas, supported by continuous teacher training and multi-stakeholder coordination among government, Non-governmental organizations, and community leaders.

Keywords: Education, Post-Conflict Recovery, Yobe State, Peace building, Insurgency

INTRODUCTION

Education remains one of the most powerful instruments for promoting sustainable peace, rebuilding human capital, and restoring social stability in post-conflict environments (Barakat, 2019; UNESCO, 2023). In societies recovering from war or violent insurgency, schools provide more than just academic instruction; they serve as safe spaces that nurture psychosocial healing, tolerance, and the reconstruction

of social networks (UNICEF, 2022). Through inclusive education, communities can bridge ethnic divides, promote civic participation, and prevent the recurrence of conflict (Novelli & Smith, 2018).

In Nigeria's North-East, the Boko Haram insurgency that began in 2009 has had devastating impacts on human and institutional development. Yobe State is among the most affected, with hundreds of schools destroyed and thousands of students displaced (UNICEF, 2022; Ali, 2021). Many teachers fled or were killed, leading to severe shortages in educational personnel. This collapse in education deepened poverty, unemployment, and social disintegration. Yet, education remains a key pathway through which recovery, reconciliation, and sustainable development can occur.

As stability gradually returns, education has re-emerged as a cornerstone of reconstruction and peace building (World Bank, 2022). It plays an essential role in restoring normalcy, rebuilding trust among citizens, and equipping youth with the skills needed for livelihood restoration. However, despite ongoing interventions by government and international partners, there is still limited empirical understanding of how education practically supports recovery in Yobe's diverse communities. This study therefore sought to fill that gap by systematically examining how education contributes to post-conflict recovery in Yobe State, identifying challenges that impede progress, and recommending strategies to strengthen educational resilience.

Statement of the Problem

Prolonged insurgency in Yobe State has gravely weakened the educational sector, leading to massive school closures, destruction of infrastructure, displacement of learners, and loss of skilled teachers (Ali, 2021). While significant efforts have been made by both government and development agencies to rehabilitate schools and promote access to learning, the extent to which education has contributed to holistic post-conflict recovery (including peace building, livelihood reconstruction, and community reintegration) remains unclear. In many affected areas, education policies are still reactive rather than transformative, focusing primarily on physical reconstruction rather than psychosocial and economic reintegration (Musa & Usman, 2022). Without a coherent understanding of how educational interventions translate into sustainable peace, there is a risk that post-conflict gains may not be consolidated. The main problem on the ground, therefore, is the absence of empirical, context-specific evidence linking educational recovery to measurable outcomes in peace building, social cohesion, and economic resilience in Yobe State. This research was justified by the urgent need to produce such evidence to bridge the knowledge gap between educational policy and field practice, and to generate actionable recommendations for the Yobe State Ministry of Education, UNICEF, and other development partners.

Objectives of the Study

The general of this study was to examine the role of education in facilitating post-conflict recovery in Yobe State, North Eastern Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought:

- i. To assess the impact of conflict on education systems and school infrastructure in Yobe State, North Eastern Nigeria;
- ii. To establish how education promotes peace building, social cohesion, and community reintegration in Yobe State, North Eastern Nigeria; and
- iii. To recommend strategies to enhance the contribution of education to post-conflict recovery in Yobe State, North Eastern Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following questions:

- i. What is the impact of conflict on education systems and school infrastructure in Yobe State, North Eastern Nigeria?
- ii. How does education promote peace building, social cohesion, and community reintegration in Yobe State, North Eastern Nigeria?
- iii. What strategies can enhance the contribution of education to post-conflict recovery in Yobe State, North Eastern Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education and Post-Conflict Recovery

Education in post-conflict societies is viewed as a foundation for rebuilding human capacity and promoting social healing (Barakat, 2019). Post-conflict recovery entails reconstructing physical infrastructure and rebuilding trust among citizens. Education contributes by re-establishing shared values and restoring community identity (UNESCO, 2021). Globally, research shows that education systems can either mitigate or worsen post-conflict tensions (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). When inclusive, education promotes civic participation and tolerance; when inequitable, it can reproduce grievances. In post-war contexts such as Rwanda and Sierra Leone, education reforms have been crucial in rebuilding human capacity and social trust (Barakat, 2019; Novelli & Smith, 2018).

In Africa, Okech and Smith (2018) found that education in South Sudan enhanced peace building through community-based schooling and youth literacy programs. Similarly, Musa and Usman (2022) observed that rehabilitated schools in Borno and Yobe States reduced youth vulnerability to extremist recruitment by providing livelihood alternatives. UNESCO (2021) and UNICEF (2022) highlight that in post-conflict settings, education also contributes to psychosocial recovery by offering safe learning environments that restore normalcy for children traumatized by war. The World Bank (2022) further notes that education is instrumental in developing employable skills essential for rebuilding fragile economies.

This study was anchored on the Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993) and the Social Reconstruction Theory (Dewey, 1933). The Human Capital Theory explains how investment in education enhances skills, productivity, and employability, making it a key driver of economic recovery in post-conflict settings like Yobe State. Social Reconstruction Theory complements this by viewing education as a tool for rebuilding social values, promoting peace, and restoring community cohesion. These theories were adopted because they jointly provide a comprehensive understanding of education's dual role in post-conflict recovery as an engine for economic revitalization and as a foundation for social reconstruction and lasting peace. Despite these insights, limited contextual evidence existed on how educational interventions in Yobe State specifically influence long-term peace building, reintegration, and economic recovery. This study filled that gap by providing localized empirical data.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of education in post-conflict recovery in Yobe State, North Eastern Nigeria. This design was appropriate because it allowed for statistical analysis of numerical data and deeper exploration of stakeholders' experiences in educational recovery.

The study was conducted in three Local Government Areas (LGAs): Damaturu, Gujba, and Geidam, which represented communities with varying levels of conflict exposure and recovery. The target population comprised 79,580 individuals, including teachers, students, parents, education administrators, and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in education and community rebuilding. Based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table, a total of 384 respondents were selected to represent the study population. A multistage sampling technique was used to ensure adequate representation. First, the population was stratified by Local Government Area to capture geographical diversity across the three selected areas. Then, three Government Day Junior Secondary Schools were purposively selected from each LGA due to their accessibility and relevance to post-conflict educational recovery. Within these schools, teachers, students, and parents were proportionately and randomly selected to ensure fairness and inclusiveness. In addition, education administrators and NGO representatives directly involved in educational recovery efforts were purposively included to provide expert insights.

Data were collected through structured questionnaires, interview guides, and focus group discussions (FGDs). The questionnaires provided quantitative data on access to education, quality of learning, community participation, and perceived contributions to peace building and recovery. Interviews and

FGDs captured qualitative perspectives on how education contributed to peace building and recovery. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of SPSS, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and meanings related to post-conflict educational outcomes.

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board before data collection. All participants were informed of the study’s purpose, assured of confidentiality, and required to give informed consent. Participation was voluntary, and anonymity was maintained throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The results are presented according to the three research questions. Quantitative findings are summarized in tables showing means, standard deviations, and decision interpretations (Low = mean below 2.50; High = mean 2.50 and above), following the sample framework provided. Qualitative data from interviews and focal group discussions (FGDs) are integrated to enrich interpretations.

Research Question One: *What is the impact of conflict on education systems and school infrastructure in Yobe State, North Eastern Nigeria?*

This objective was achieved through quantitative data collected to assess the perceived impact of the insurgency on education. Based on the constructs of the variables, means and standard deviations were used to present the levels, and items were ranked based on mean scores.

Table 1: Descriptive Survey Showing Respondents’ Perceptions of the Impact of Conflict on Education Systems and School Infrastructure in Yobe State

Impact of Conflict on Education Systems and School Infrastructure	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Decision
Many schools were completely destroyed or severely damaged during the insurgency	3.45	0.721	1	High
Large numbers of teachers were displaced, killed, or fled the affected LGAs	3.38	0.802	2	High
Instructional materials, furniture, and record systems were looted or burnt	3.31	0.845	3	High
Prolonged school closures led to massive learning loss among children	3.29	0.879	4	High
Students, especially girls, faced abduction and threats, discouraging school enrollment	3.18	0.912	5	High
Average Mean	3.32	0.832		High

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Results in Table 1 show that all items recorded mean scores above 3.00, with an overall average mean of 3.32 (interpreted as high) and a standard deviation of 0.832. This indicates that respondents strongly agreed that the conflict had a severe negative impact on education systems and school infrastructure. The highest-ranked item (mean = 3.45) was the complete destruction or severe damage of schools, followed by the displacement or death of teachers (mean = 3.38). Qualitative interviews confirmed these findings: one community leader in Geidam stated, “*Our primary school was used as a military outpost; after the fighting, nothing remained but shells of classrooms.*” Another teacher in Damaturu added, “*I lost fourteen colleagues. We are only now beginning to regroup.*” These results demonstrate that the physical and human capital dimensions of education were systematically eroded, aligning with Ali (2021) and UNICEF (2022). The high level of agreement across all LGAs suggests that conflict impacts were widespread and not limited to a single area.

Research Question Two: How does education promote peace building, social cohesion, and community reintegration in Yobe State, North Eastern Nigeria?

This objective was addressed by asking respondents to rate how education contributes to positive recovery outcomes. Means, standard deviations, and rankings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Survey Showing Respondents’ Perceptions of How Education Promotes Peace Building, Social Cohesion, and Community Reintegration

Educational Contributions to Peace Building and Recovery	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Decision
Schools provide safe spaces where children regain a sense of normalcy and psychosocial healing	3.51	0.698	1	High
Peace education and value reorientation programs reduce prejudice and promote tolerance among youth	3.47	0.724	2	High
Re-opened schools encourage community gatherings and dialogue, rebuilding trust among residents	3.40	0.761	3	High
Vocational and livelihood skills taught in schools help young people avoid extremist recruitment	3.33	0.803	4	High
Inclusive education (girls and displaced children) restores social equity and reduces grievances	3.25	0.845	5	High
Average Mean	3.39	0.766		High

Source: Field Survey, 2024

As shown in Table 2, the overall average mean was 3.39 (high) with a standard deviation of 0.766, indicating strong agreement that education actively promotes peace building, social cohesion, and community reintegration. The highest-ranked contribution was schools providing safe spaces for psychosocial healing (mean = 3.51). A female student in Gujba expressed during an FGD: *“Coming back to school made me feel like life was returning. We pray together and share our stories; the teacher listens.”* The second-ranked item (mean = 3.47) was peace education reducing prejudice, which aligns with Novelli and Smith (2018). An education official in Damaturu noted: *“We introduced a weekly peace club; children now mediate small disputes at home.”* Community reintegration was also evident: a parent in Geidam said, *“When the school reopened, neighbors who had accused each other of supporting insurgents began talking again because their children were classmates.”*

The results empirically confirm the theoretical expectations of Social Reconstruction Theory (Dewey, 1933) that education rebuilds shared values and community fabric. Notably, even the lowest-ranked item (inclusive education restoring equity, mean = 3.25) remained in the high category, suggesting that all dimensions of educational contribution are meaningful. However, interview data also revealed that these benefits are uneven: in more remote areas of Gujba, some schools had reopened but lacked trained peace education teachers. Nevertheless, the quantitative evidence clearly establishes that education is a functional tool for post-conflict recovery beyond mere infrastructure restoration.

Research Question Three: *What strategies can enhance the contribution of education to post-conflict recovery in Yobe State, North Eastern Nigeria?*

Respondents rated a set of potential strategies. Table 3 presents their perceptions.

Table 3: Descriptive Survey Showing Respondents’ Perceptions of Strategies to Enhance Education’s Contribution to Post-Conflict Recovery

Recommended Strategies	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Decision
Increased government funding for school rehabilitation and teacher recruitment	3.62	0.654	1	High
Systematic integration of peace education and psychosocial support into the curriculum	3.58	0.682	2	High
Provision of protective infrastructure (fences, security personnel) to prevent further attacks	3.50	0.731	3	High
Continuous training of teachers in conflict-sensitive pedagogy and trauma healing	3.49	0.745	4	High
Strengthened coordination among government, TETFund, NGOs, and community leaders	3.41	0.789	5	High
Scholarship and livelihood linkages for vulnerable students to prevent dropout	3.38	0.812	6	High
Average Mean	3.50	0.735		High

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 reveals that all six strategies were rated highly, with an overall average mean of 3.50 (standard deviation 0.735). The highest-ranked strategy (mean = 3.62) was increased government funding for school rehabilitation and teacher recruitment, reflecting persistent resource constraints noted in the problem statement. A school principal in Damaturu remarked: “We have only eight teachers for six hundred students. Without funding, recovery is a slogan.” The second-ranked strategy (mean = 3.58) was integrating peace education and psychosocial support into the curriculum, which directly addresses the need for transformative rather than merely reactive policies (Musa & Usman, 2022). The third-ranked strategy (mean = 3.50) concerned protective infrastructure. An NGO representative explained: “Parents will not send their children to a school that can be burned down again. Security is a precondition.”

Other strategies, such as teacher training (mean = 3.49), coordination among stakeholders (mean = 3.41), and scholarships with livelihood linkages (mean = 3.38), were also strongly endorsed. The consistently high ratings across all items indicate a clear consensus that a multi-pronged approach is required. Qualitative data added nuance: community leaders in Gujba emphasized that “coordination must include us, the traditional rulers, not just officials from the state capital.” This suggests that while funding is paramount, local ownership and context-sensitive programming are equally critical.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings from Research Question One confirmed that the insurgency in Yobe State caused catastrophic damage to educational infrastructure, loss of teaching personnel, and prolonged learning disruption. This aligns with earlier reports by UNICEF (2022) and Ali (2021). The high mean scores across all impact items demonstrate that no single aspect of the education system was spared. The destruction was not only physical but also human, with teacher displacement and student trauma creating a multi-generational educational deficit.

Regarding Research Question Two, the study established that education functions as a restorative force beyond academic instruction. Schools provide psychosocial safety, platforms for community dialogue, and opportunities for peace education. These results support the Social Reconstruction Theory (Dewey, 1933) and echo international experiences from Rwanda and Sierra Leone (Barakat, 2019). The finding that vocational skills reduce vulnerability to extremist recruitment is particularly relevant for Yobe State,

as it adds empirical weight to the argument for linking education to livelihood recovery (World Bank, 2022).

For Research Question Three, the strong endorsement of increased funding, peace education, protective infrastructure, teacher training, coordination, and scholarships indicates that stakeholders perceive a clear roadmap for enhancing education's role in post-conflict recovery. The highest priority placed on funding and teacher recruitment reflects the reality of severe resource constraints, while the high ranking of peace education signals a demand for transformative, not just reconstructive, policies. The convergence between quantitative ratings and qualitative narratives strengthens the validity of these recommendations.

CONCLUSION

The problematic link between prolonged insurgency and educational collapse in Yobe State demands urgent and sustained attention. This study concluded that the conflict had a devastating impact on education systems and school infrastructure, evidenced by widespread destruction, teacher displacement, and learning loss. However, education was also found to play a catalytic role in post-conflict recovery by providing safe spaces, fostering peace education, rebuilding social cohesion, and supporting community reintegration. Without a coherent, empirically informed strategy, post-conflict gains risk being undermined by inadequate funding, insecurity, and weak coordination. Policy interventions are most likely to be effective when they adopt a holistic approach that combines physical reconstruction with psychosocial support, peace education, teacher training, and community engagement, all anchored in increased and sustained financing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. The Yobe State Government, in partnership with the Federal Government and indeed development partners, should substantially increase and consistently disburse funding specifically earmarked for post-conflict educational recovery. This funding must go beyond rebuilding walls to include recruitment of qualified teachers, provision of instructional materials, and restoration of school records and examination systems. Without adequate financial commitment, the physical reconstruction already undertaken will not translate into functional learning environments
2. The State Ministry of Education should mandate and support the systematic integration of peace education and psychosocial support into the basic education curriculum across all affected LGAs. This requires developing context-appropriate modules that address trauma healing, conflict resolution, inter-community tolerance, and civic participation. Teachers should be trained continuously in conflict-sensitive pedagogy, and schools should establish peace clubs and peer mediation mechanisms as routine practice.
3. Security and protective infrastructure must be strengthened as a precondition for educational recovery. The government, in collaboration with community security committees and traditional rulers, should ensure that rehabilitated schools have adequate perimeter fencing, secured entry points, and, where feasible, dedicated school security personnel. This will rebuild parental confidence and enable sustained school attendance, particularly for girls who remain the most vulnerable.
4. Enhanced coordination among government agencies, TETFund, international NGOs (such as UNICEF and the World Bank), and community leaders is essential. A multi-stakeholder post-conflict education recovery task force should be established at the LGA level to align interventions, share data, avoid duplication, and ensure that community voices directly inform programming. Coordination must be horizontal (across sectors) and vertical (from state to community levels).
5. Scholarship programs and livelihood linkages should be expanded to cover not only tuition but also essential needs such as school feeding, uniforms, and transport for displaced and vulnerable

children. In addition, secondary school curricula should embed practical vocational skills (agriculture, tailoring, basic trades) that provide youth with immediate economic alternatives, thereby reducing the risk of extremist recruitment and fostering long-term community resilience.

6. Further research should be conducted to track longitudinal outcomes of educational recovery, particularly the relationship between peace education programming and actual reductions in community violence or extremist reintegration. Such evidence will help refine strategies and sustain donor and government investment in education as a pillar of post-conflict reconstruction in Yobe State and beyond

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