

## INSURGENCY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS' SAFETY IN NIGERIA'S NORTH-EAST REGION

Isah, Emmanuel A. & Yakubu, Suleman

*Department of Educational Management,*

*Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria*

*emmanisah1959@yahoo.com & alwaystrust2002@yahoo.com*

### **Abstract**

*An environment where there are incessant terrorist attacks cannot be conducive for effective academic activities and as such, little or no desired learning outcome should be expected in such area. On this premise, the need to create and maintain safe environment for effective teaching and learning becomes paramount. This paper focuses on the Boko-Haram insurgency, its effects on school safety and possible solutions to curtail the menace which affects smooth running of academic activities in the North-East Region of Nigeria. The pervasive effects of insurgency on school safety included: reduction in school attendance, migration of qualified teachers, destruction of school infrastructures, closure of schools and lack of concentration in class. The study recommended that preventive measures for the safety of students in schools included construction of high fence, installation of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras at strategic locations, intensifying security of the schools and provision of escape routes in case of an invasion.*

**Keyword:** *Insurgency, School Safety, Secondary Schools, North East Region*

### **Introduction**

Nigeria is popularly referred to as the giant of Africa. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and the seventh most populous country globally, with an estimated population of about 202 million people (Odunsi, 2018). The country is divided into 36 States with a Federal Capital Territory and grouped into six geo-political zones that reflect the ethnicity and culture of the people (Raji, 2014). Nigeria's geo-political zones and states are shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Nigeria's Six Geo-Political Zones**

<b>Geo-Political Zone</b>	<b>States within the Geo-political zones</b>
North Central (N/C)	Benue, FCT, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau
North East (N/E)	Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe
North West (N/E)	Kaduna, Katsina, Kano, Kebbi, Sokoto, Jigawa, Zamfara
South East (S/E)	Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo
South-South (S/S)	Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross-River, Delta, Edo, Rivers
South West (S/W)	Ekiti, Lagos, Osun, Ondo, Ogun, Oyo

In the past, the six geo-political zones enjoyed a relatively peaceful atmosphere and harmonious relationship among one another except for some inter-tribal crises, communal clashes, religious disturbances and differences that the government could curb with the involvement of security operatives. Such disputes were usually resolved through fruitful dialogue with the parties involved. It should be noted that many of the security challenges that occurred at that time had little or no threat to schools or its environment. This made the schools' environments safe for carrying out academic activities as there was no security threat or anxiety.

In recent years, several groups of agitators such as the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Movement for the Actualizations of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Indigenous People of Biafra arose in the South-South region and South-East respectively. The Boko-Haram insurgents arose in the North-Eastern region and they crept in unnoticed and ever since, they have become difficult to subdue despite all efforts of the Nigerian government to bring their notorious activities to a halt.

Boko-Haram insurgency concentrated in North-Eastern Region of Nigeria appears to be the most incessant and devastating group compared with any insurgency in any other regions of Nigeria. Since the commencement of Boko-Haram terrorists' activities, they have been

involved in kidnapping school girls, assassinating Nigerians, invading communities and villages as well as bombing defenseless civilians and burning religious centres, public places and institutions, particularly schools (Akintunde and Selzing-Musa, 2016) as the target of many of their insurgent attacks. During their early years of attacks, their attack was towards defenseless people (Igbinedion, Newby and Sparkes, 2017). This led many Nigerians to flee for safety and security especially Nigerians residing in the North-Eastern Region (Medugu, 2017).

In view of the foregoing dastardly attacks, learning activities in schools' environment in the North-Eastern Region were and are still seriously under threat leaving parents and guardians worried about the safety of their children in their respective schools. An environment where there are incessant terrorist attacks cannot be conducive for effective academic activities and as such, little or no desired learning outcome should be expected in such area. Given this scenario, possible solutions must be sought as quickly as possible to arrest this unwanted situation, otherwise, the educational system in the region may experience total breakdown which may jeopardize the future development of the nation. Hence, the need to create and maintain safe environment for effective teaching and learning becomes paramount.

The aim of this paper therefore, is to discuss what could be done to bring about safe school environment during insurgency. It begins by examining the concept of school safety, insurgency, and overview of Boko-Haram activities over the years. This is followed by the root causes of insurgency and resultant effects of insurgency on school safety. Finally, it concludes by discussing the preventive measures to be put in place to ensure school safety.

### **Concept of School Safety**

Hornby (2005) defined safety as the state of being safe and protected from danger or harm. Mastura (2013), as cited by Ssekamanya, Badzis, Ismail and Abduludin (2016), described safety as the behavior and practices that protect children and adults from risk or injury. In the words of Ssekamanya, Mastura, Khamsiah and Dayang (2016), safety is a preference for social and physical settings that provide protection and minimize the chances of being attacked or hurt. School safety, therefore, can be described as a school environment where children are

safe from all types of hazard and risk (UNESCO, 2012). In the context of this paper, school safety is the provision and maintenance of a secured learning environment for students and staff in order to facilitate effective teaching and learning.

This implies that when students are provided with secured learning environment, they feel safe at school and are able to focus on their learning. Similarly, Akintunde and Selzing-Musa (2016) posited that a safe learning environment that is devoid of security threats is perceived to enhance learning. In the words of Osterman (2000) and Blum, McNeely and Rinehart (2002), a safe, caring, participatory and responsive school climate fosters greater complement to school and provides the maximal foundation for social, emotional and academic learning. Contrarily, students who are not provided with safe learning environment would be discouraged and this frustrates the goals and essence of academic learning. From the foregoing, the importance of school safety cannot be underestimated.

### **Concept of Insurgency**

The United States Department of Defence (2007) defined insurgency as organized movement that has the aim of overthrowing a constituted government through subversive means and armed conflict (Cited in Helleesen, 2008:14). According to Olugbenga and Ayooluwa (2017), insurgency is an attempt to take control of a country by force. In the words of Siegel (2007), insurgency is an attempt to confront and overthrow an existing government for the control of power, resources or for power sharing. With the above definitions, insurgency is a treasonable offence and like all other treasonable offences, must be treated accordingly.

### **An Overview of the Boko-Haram Sect and their Activities over the Years**

This group (Boko-Haram) commenced operation in 2002 in a non-violent manner as an Islamic movement under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf (Akintunde and Selzing-Musa, 2016). At its inception, the group engaged in antagonistic utterances against political leaders it believed were bastions of injustice, corruption and maladministration. This Islamic sect campaigned against western education, civilization and

values which inspired the name “Boko-Haram”, which means “western education is forbidden”.

In 2004, the group migrated to Kanamma, Yobe State, where it set up a base called “Afganistan”. This base was used to attack nearby police outposts, killing of police officers, burning Churches and schools with a vow that the war will continue as long as the political and educational system remained westernized. The Federal Government of Nigeria saw these demands as treasonable, unreasonable and unacceptable. In an attempt to purge the group of its excesses, Mohammed Yusuf the leader was executed in 2009 (Oladunjoye and Omemu, 2013).

Shortly after the execution of Mohammed Yusuf, Abubakar Shekau emerged as the new leader of the group in that same year which subsequently increased the frequency and intensity of its attacks across the North-East Region of Nigeria. Ever since, the group have been involved in kidnapping school girls, assassinating people, invading communities and villages as well as bombing and burning religious centres and public places, particularly schools (Akintunde and Selzing-Musa, 2016).

Below are some highlights of the cruel activities by Boko-Haram insurgents in some school areas in the North-Eastern Region since the last six years that posed serious threat to educational activities in that region.

On Tuesday 28 February, 2012, pupils of Gomari Costain Primary School in Maiduguri woke up to the shock that their school has been destroyed by fire (Vanguard, 28 February, 2012).



**Figure 1: Gomari Costain Primary School burnt down by Boko-Haram**  
**Source: [www.dailypost.ng](http://www.dailypost.ng)**

In October 2012, over 40 students were murdered in cold blood in Federal Polytechnic Adamawa State, the North-Eastern State of Nigeria in a fashion that is considered worst in the history of their operation. Names of students were called one after the other and slaughtered like animals, lecturers were not spared as well as warders (The Nation, October, 2012).

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 2013, gunmen stormed a secondary boarding school in the village of Mamudo in Yobe State where they rounded up students and staff in a dormitory, threw explosives and opened fire, killing 42 people, almost all of them were students (Vanguard, July 8 2013).

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of February, 2014, at about 1:30am, Boko-Haram terrorists, numbering more than 50, invaded the Federal Government College, Buni Yadi, Yobe State, killing more than 43 students and staff while 16 female students were abducted (Vanguard 26 February, 2014).



**Figure 2: Federal Government College, Buni Yadi, Yobe State burnt by Boko-Haram**  
**Source: [www.informationng.com](http://www.informationng.com)**

On the night of 14/15 April 2014, 276 female students were kidnapped from the Government Secondary School in the town of Chibok in Borno State, Nigeria.



**Figure 3: The kidnapped Chibok Girls by Boko-Haram**  
Source: [www.dailypost.ng](http://www.dailypost.ng)

A suicide bomber suspected to be a member of the dreaded Boko-Haram sect, armed with Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) and AK47 rifle on Friday launched an attack on the College of Administrative and Business Studies (CABS) Potiskum in Yobe State (Vanguard May 8 2015).

On February 19, 2018, 5:30pm, one hundred and ten (110) school girls aged 11–19 years were kidnapped by the Boko-Haram terrorist group from the Government Girls' Science and Technical College (GGSTC), Dapchi, located in Bulabulin, Yunusari Local Government area of Yobe State, in the North-East part of Nigeria (*Sahara, Reporters 2 March 2018*).





**Figure 4: The kidnapped Dapchi Girls by Boko-Haram**

Source: [www.dailypost.ng](http://www.dailypost.ng)

#### Root Causes of Insurgency

- i. **Disparity in the Distribution of Resources:** Lack of equitable distribution of power and resources make many aggrieved groups seek exit from the states, including resorting to insurgency (Aghedo and Osumah, 2014).
- ii. **Illiteracy:** The level of literacy in the Northern region of Nigeria is relatively low compared with other geo-political zones. The data on literacy index published in 2017 by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) revealed that the states where majority of people can neither read nor write are those in the North-East, North-West, and North-Central region (The Guardian, 28 July, 2017). For instance, in the North-Eastern Region, the data shows that Yobe State had only 7.23% literacy level and it is the lowest in the country, followed by Bauchi with 19.26%, Borno had 23.11%, Gombe 29.05%, Adamawa 55.82% and Taraba 72.0%. The low level of literacy in the region, has no doubt, made it easier for the people to be cajoled to join the sect to perpetuate crimes.
- iii. **Poverty:** A significant number of people in Nigeria are living in abject poverty, due to failure of the government to provide economic opportunities in the area for more than a decade (Medugu, 2017). It is particularly worse in the North-East region where 78% of the population in Adamawa, 61% in Borno and 82% in Yobe are living below the poverty line (CIA Factbook, 2017). This has therefore made it easy for the Boko-Haram sect to recruit the youths in those regions (Olojo, 2013).

- iv. **Mass Unemployment:** Members of Boko-Haram has consistently and continuously been increasing on daily basis in spite of the high rate of death recorded from the confrontation with Nigerian Army (Megudu, 2017). Data published by Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) pegs the unemployment rate at 18.80% in the third quarter of 2017 from 16.20% in the second quarter of 2017. The high level of unemployment in the country is probably responsible for their upsurge. Just as it is generally said that “an idle hand is the devil’s workshop”.
- v. **Agitation of Boko-Haram:** The word Boko-Haram connotes western education is evil. In light of this, the movement vehemently kicked against any form of formal education at any level different from their acceptable Islamic education. With this singular agitation, the group due to government pressure to curb them metamorphosis into terrorist group being sponsored by several Islamic fundamentalists within and outside Nigeria.

#### **Resultant Effects of Insurgency on School Safety in the North-East Region**

The resultant effects of Boko-Haram’s repeated attacks on school safety in the North-East region of Nigeria are as follows;

- i. **Reduction in School Attendance:** Many parents and guardians have withdrawn their wards from schools due to fear of being attacked by terrorists (Akintunde and Selzing-Musa, 2016), thereby reducing school attendance. According to Director of Basic and Secondary Education in the Federal Ministry of Education, in 2013, about 15,000 children in Borno State have stopped attending classes following the increased insecurity in the State, including the attacks on schools.
- ii. **Death and Migration of Qualified Teachers:** According to UNICEF (2018), at least 2,295 teachers had been killed in the North-Eastern Region since the conflict started in 2009. This has made many teachers to resign or flee from the area to more secured cities like Lagos State (Brendan, 2010). For instance, In Madagali Local Government Area of Adamawa State, continuing assassinations of teachers and the issuing of death threats from Boko-Haram to teachers in such area have forced

many teachers to leave their communities (Amnesty International, 2013). According to Igbinedion, Newby and Sparkes (2017), about 19,000 teachers have been displaced since Boko-Haram insurgency started in the North-Eastern Region of Nigeria.

- iii. **Destruction of School Infrastructure:** Although school infrastructure in the North-Eastern Region of Nigeria was not in great shape before the emergence of Boko-Haram, the cumulative effect of attacks, looting and wanton destruction of schools by Boko-Haram have left education infrastructure in a catastrophic state (Igbinedion, Newby and Sparkes, 2017). According to This day (2018), more than 1,400 schools in the North-Eastern Region of Nigeria have been burnt down and destroyed by insurgents since 2009 and therefore, has grossly reduced the availability of access to education for many children.
- iv. **Closure of School:** In a study carried out by Igbinedion, Newby and Sparkes (2017), it was found that between 2013 and 2017, an estimated 943 out of 1,627 schools in Borno State have been closed due to the notorious attacks launched by this dreaded sect. This is an indication that there are few safe spaces left for children in the North-Eastern region of Nigeria (Thisday, 2018).
- v. **Lack of Concentration in Class Work:** Where there is insurgency, there is bound to be pandemonium and security threat which cause lack of concentration in learning activities and thus affects the students' performance.
- vi. **Resource Wastage:** Resources meant for other developmental purposes are diverted towards the reconstruction of schools and procurement of facilities that were either bombed or burned down during insurgency, thereby causing resource wastage.

It is expected that all stakeholders work together in an effort to ensure safety in schools' environments. This is because it is a collective issue that needs total unity and cooperation of stakeholders for the total eradication of insecurity. Until this is done, insecurity will continue to flourish.

### **Preventive Measures**

The following are preventive measures that stakeholders ought to utilize to curb this menace.

#### **The Role of Government**

- i. **Prohibition of Illegal Possession of Arms:** Any individual arrested with arms should be charged immediately to court by the law enforcement agents for illegal possession of arms and be prosecuted accordingly.
- ii. **Vigilance on Arms' Distribution:** The law enforcement agencies saddled with possession and distribution of arms should revisit their strategies in combating illegal handling of arms for prime control of such.
- iii. **Unbiased Prosecution of Terrorists' Sponsors:** The full weight of the law should be enforced on those caught and their sponsors, irrespective of the position held in the society. It is only then that the government can be seen to be practically fighting against terrorism.
- iv. **Robust Reconstruction of Vandalized Infrastructure:** The school infrastructures that were burnt down should be reconstructed and equipped with better facilities which enhance performance.
- v. **Purchase of Modern Arms and Ammunition:** Government should endeavor to re-equip the nation's security agents with modern and more sophisticated weapons combat insurgent activities.

#### **The Role of School Administrators and Teachers**

- i. **Construction of Perimeter Fence:** Construction of fence with barbed wire is necessary in an environment vulnerable to cases of insurgency, as this will curtail any intruder from causing havoc.
- ii. **Installation of CCTV:** Video surveillance cameras should be installed inside and outside the school premises to monitor the movement of people in and out of the premises. This will make any crime, if committed at all, traceable by the security agents for easy investigation.

- iii. **Employment of Experienced and Competent Security Guards:** All schools should beef-up their security system by employing security guards who have military experience as this will help in reducing the possibility of people with cheap sinister motives.
- iv. **Provision of Security Gadgets:** Security gadgets such as scanners, telephones, whistles, alarm and so on should be made available for security reasons.
- v. **Provision of Escape Route:** Escape routes should be provided for both students and staff in case of any invasion by the insurgents.

In actualizing the above roles of administrators and teachers, government should encourage donations from well-to-do stakeholders and philanthropists to cater for the above needs as it is being done in some advanced countries in Europe and America. International bodies such as UNESCO can also be approached for financial supports. Their supports, no doubt, will make it possible in putting the needful facilities as mentioned above in place.

#### **The Role of Parents**

- i. **Basic Safety Tips:** Parents need to teach their children basic safety tips such as to go home immediately after school hours and to keep away from strangers.
- ii. **Cooperation:** Parents should cooperate with school authorities and security agents on school safety measures.
- iii. **Religious Sentiment:** Religious sentiment should be avoided.
- iv. **Information Dissemination:** Parents should be ready without fear and sentiment to give useful information to government and security operatives rather than covering or harboring culprits under their roofs.

#### **Conclusion**

Insurgency is one of the greatest threats to school safety in the North-East Region in recent time and has seriously hampered smooth running of academic activities due to lack of safety in various schools in the region. With the above recommendations, it is strongly believed, to a significant extent, that the attacks being unleashed on the education sector in Nigeria in general and in the North-East Region in particular

will be reduced to the barest minimum if not totally eradicated, which will invariably make academic activities more efficient and productive.

### Recommendations

- i. Any individual arrested with arms should be charged immediately to court by the law enforcement agents for illegal possession of arms and be prosecuted accordingly.
- ii. The school infrastructures that were burnt down should be reconstructed and equipped with better facilities which enhance performance.
- iii. Video surveillance cameras should be installed inside and outside the school premises to monitor the movement of people in and out of the premises. This will make any crime, if committed at all, traceable by the security agents for easy investigation.
- iv. All schools should beef-up their security system by employing security guards who have military experience as this will help in reducing the possibility of people with cheap sinister motives.
- v. Parents need to teach their children basic safety tips such as to go home immediately after school hours and to keep away from strangers.

### References

- Aghedo, I. & Osumah, O. (2014). Insurgency in Nigeria: A comparative study of Niger Delta and Boko Haram uprisings. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*. Online. <http://jas.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/02/20/0021909614520726.abstract> (Accessed February 26, 2014).
- Akintunde, O. & Selzling-Musa, G. (2016). Environmental Insecurity and the Nigerian Child's Learning: Coping Strategies. *Asia Pacific Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, Vol. 4, No.1 pp13-17.
- Brenda, O. (2010). The long term impact of attacks on education systems, development and fragility and the implications for policy responses. Education for All Global Monitoring Report.
- CIA Factbook (2017). <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2046.html>

- Hellesen, P. (2008). Counterinsurgency and its Implications for the Norwegian Special Operations Forces. *A Thesis for the Naval Post Graduate School*, Monterey, California.
- Hornby, A.S. (2005). Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition.
- Igbinedion, S., Newby, L. & Sparkes, J. (2017). Joint Education Needs Assessment Northeast Nigeria. [https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/jdocumntfdffs/files/04122017\\_nga\\_jena\\_repot\\_final\\_draft.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/jdocumntfdffs/files/04122017_nga_jena_repot_final_draft.pdf)
- Medugu, P. Z. (2017). The effect of boko haram activities on educational development in Madagali local government area of Adamawa State. *International Journal of Academic Research and Development*, Vol. 2(1): 14-23
- National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2016). Annual Abstract of Statistics Vol 1. <http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/pdfuploads/ANNUAL%20ABSTRACT%20STATISTICS%20VOLUME-1.pdf>
- Odunsi, W. (2018). FG reveals Nigeria's current population. Retrieved from <http://dailypost.ng/2018/04/11/fg-reveals-nigerias-current-population/>
- Oladunjoye P. & Omemu F. (2013). Effect of Boko Haram on School Attendance in Northern Nigeria. *British Journal of Education*. 1(2):1-9.
- Olojo A. (2013). Nigeria's Troubled North: Interrogating the Drivers of Public Support for Boko Haram. Retrieved. from <http://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Olojo-Nigerias-Troubled-North>.
- Olugbenga, O.S. & Ayooluwa, A.E. (2017). Boko-Haram Insurgency and its Implications on the Rights of the Female Gender in Nigeria. *Agora International Journal of Juridical Sciences*. No. 1, pp. 33-54
- Osterman, K. E. (2000). Students' need for belonging in the school community. *Review of Educational Research*, 70, 323-367. doi:10.2307/1170786
- Raji, I.A. (2014). Access Gaps in University Education in Nigeria. *African Journal of Educational Management*. Vol 15 (14), 201-214.

- Sahara, Reporters (2 March 2018). Abducted Dapchi Girls in 'Boko Haram town' in Yobe, Claims Rep. Sahara Reporters Inc. Sahara Reporters Inc. Retrieved 4 March 2018.
- Siegel, L.J. (2007) *Criminology: Theories, Patterns and Typologies*. 11th edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Ssekamanya, S.A.; Mastura, B.; Khamsiah, I. & Dayang, S. A. (2016). Predictors of School Safety Awareness among Malaysian Primary School Teachers. *European Journal of Social Sciences Education and Research*. Vol.6 (1), 88-93.
- The Guardian (24 July, 2017). Despite decades of funding, literacy level in the northern states remains low. Retrieved from <https://guardian.ng/news/despite-decades-of-funding-literacy-level-in-the-northern-states-remains-low/>
- Vanguard News (On April 13, 2018 12:48 am). Over 1,000 children abducted in northeast since 2013 – UNICEF. Read more at: Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/04/1000-children-abducted-northeast-since-2013-unicef/><https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/04/1000-children-abd>
- Vanguard May 8 2015 Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/05/breaking-news-three-students-killed-20-injured-as-boko-haram-attacks-yobe-school/>