

# **BOKO HARAM AS A CANKERWORM OF BACKWARDNESS IN THE NORTHERN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS ON ADULT EDUCATION**

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## **Abstract**

*The insecurity in the Northeast Nigeria in the last decades has brought a lot of hardships on the people. The schools have experienced more closures either as a result of industrial action by teachers and political crisis, a recent example is the insurgence of Boko Haram sect in the Northeast geo-political zone, which has led to the close down of schools in the region. The political patronage results in politicization of knowledge especially in the absence of clear educational policies and goals. The insecurity has led to closure of schools, thus affect literacy level of people particularly children and adults. Therefore, this study examined causes of Boko Haram terrorism and its effects on adult education. It was recommended that there is need for the government to earmark more fund to security aimed at combating the Boko-Haram insurgency. There is need to prevent re-occurrence of recent insurgency by ensuring a rational national planning and mass job or employment provision by the government to the youth.*

**Keywords:** Boko haram, Adult education, insurgency, terrorism,  
*Political instability*

## **Introduction**

It is no doubt that different militant groups have emerged in Nigeria with Boko Haram leading the prawn. The activities of Boko Haram have heightened serious fears among the Nigerian populace, especially those in Yobe State. The trend of which has led to loss of lives and properties of huge value. The abduction of more than 200 school girls in Chibok in April 2014, the attack on the United Nations headquarters in Abuja and the recent devastating assaults on two Nigeria border towns-Baga and Doro Gowon in Borno State where an estimated 2,000 people were reportedly killed according to human rights organisations. This has led to

backwardness of education in the region especially among the children. The effects of Boko Haram insurgency included posterity hopelessness of the poor children and hence become poorly educated or lack of what is their fundamental right as a Nigerian child.

Beyond the widespread of displacement, many children are killed or orphaned by these terrorist acts. Most children in the affected areas find themselves severely traumatized, while many were wounded or forced out to lie on streets. Some areas were totally destroyed by the Boko Haram insurgency which included: Gujba, Buni, Yadi and Potiskum. This has led to many school children being killed and most were neglected to face the unsolved problem created by the insurgency.

It has been established that insurgency of Boko Haram have posed a serious challenge to this nation which have been briefly highlighted without neglecting factors that instigate militancy in Nigeria which later concludes with recommendations towards avoidance of future military insurgency. It could be recalled that the main reasons behind formation of these ethnic militants are social injustice, marginalization, neglect, deprivation (The Punch Newspaper, 2017). However, the benefits of education as stated in National Policy on Education (FGN, 2014) include the following:

- To develop the full potentialities of every child, consideration of the needs and welfare of the country
- To develop social and individual efficiency so that the individual can become more effective in the society
- For the preparation and training of young people for the problems, the task and the future as they exist
- For self-fulfillment or self-reliance

The aims of education presented show that provision of education especially in the Northeastern Nigeria is not complementing the stated objectives. Indeed, it has not yielded to the needs of individual and national development. Araromi (1996) submitted that the formal western education replaced our informal education system. Nigerian government and various Christian missionaries established schools in Nigeria where the Nigerians were taught. The embracing of western education in Nigeria was occasioned by the

roles education plays in the life of individuals and nations of the world today.

It has been established that education of the adult group is vital to any development process and the development trends of the world reveals that leading industrial nations laid much importance on adult education. Ezewu (1998) rightly noted that no society can develop unless there are efficient men and women who can operate its social institutions. Thus, adult literacy is the key to improve productivity in every nation. This is because highly literate workers are skillful to change the level of production technologies and enhance innovative capacity of force which is very critical for economic development (Okunlola, 2001).

### **Historical Background of Boko Haram**

Boko Haram is a militant group in North-eastern Nigeria. Its real name is known as Jama'at Ahl al-sunna lial-Da'awat wa al-Jihad which means Sunni Group for preaching and Jihad. The group was founded around 2002, largely to preach an Islamic ideology based on doctrine of the Taliban as well as groups such as al-Qaeda. It sought to disassociate itself from the Nigerian states and form a community only of its followers. At the same time, it did likely believed that a confrontation with the Nigerian state was inevitable due to the fact that a confrontation did not follow any state obligations and tried to create a quasi-state of its own followers in the North-eastern Nigeria (Okoro, 2014).

In 2009, Boko Haram sect engaged in clashes with the Northern Nigerian states and it has been engaged in violent battles in the area till date. It has targeted Christian's communities in North-eastern Nigeria as well as muslim traditional leaders who object to the violent tactics or its ideology. In 2014, the violence escalated dramatically where 10,849 deaths were recorded. The insurgency has since spread to Cameroun, Chad, and Niger Republic, thus, becoming a major regional conflict (The Punch Newspaper, 2017).

Adeyanju, Salami, Ogundele, Alabi and Okemakinde (2005) opined that the political instability in the country in the last decades has brought a lot of hardship on the people. The schools have experienced more closures either as a result of industrial action by teachers or social and political uproar, a recent example is the

insurgence of Boko Haram sect in the North, which has led to the closure of schools in this region.

### **Consequences of Boko Haram Terrorism on Education**

According to Ugwamba and Odom (2015), the negative effects of Boko Haram attacks on the education system in North east Nigeria has a lot of effects. Generally, it has recorded that between 2012 till date, the insecurity generated by the constant attacks and fighting in Borno and other states in the North-eastern Nigeria led many parents to send their children away or leave the state, disrupting their education (Amnesty International, 2013). According to documents provided by Director of Basic and Secondary Education in the Federal Ministry of Education, in 2013, schools in the North-east recorded the lowest number in recent years of pupils who applied and were admitted into junior secondary schools in the country. In one of the schools in Mungono, out of 160 eligible pupils, only 60 applied for admission into junior secondary school in 2013.

An official in the Ministry of Education in Borno state reportedly stated that “around 15,000 children in Borno state have stopped attending classes, because no movement is allowed in or out. The army has banned the use of all forms of transportation even within the town. (Amnesty International, 2013). Also, attacks on schools may lead teachers to giving up their job, flee the area, or even leave the country (Brendar, 2010). In the North eastern region of Nigeria, many teachers were forced to leave their community because of the increasing threat from Boko Haram. Continuing assassinations of teachers and the issuing of death threats will inevitably affect teachers’ concentration and frame of mind for teaching. Insecurity has compromised the ability of teachers to perform their jobs well and has affected morale (Amnesty International, 2013). According to Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011 (EFAGMR), recruitment of school children for child Soldiers is another effect. As Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria escalates, the group is building an insurgency that increasingly includes children, a practice found as increasing favour among the latest round of uprising in Africa.

Thousands of children are serving as soldiers in armed conflicts around the world. Often, they are abducted in schools, on the street or at home and Nigeria abducted Chibok girls is an example. The Northern

region of Nigeria, where the attacks are concentrated, is a home to the majority of Nigeria's 11 million out-of-school children. There, Boko Haram found young, uneducated fighters, easy to recruit from the ranks of vulnerable street kids and almajiris, poor boys who are sent to beg by Muslim religious leaders (Strochlic, 2014).

Psychological and Social effects of Boko Haram's Attack on Education: The reactions to Boko Haram attacks are not restricted to students in schools that have actually been attacked, as an attack on one school, leads to fear that any school in the area might be attacked. Children run the risk of never being able to return to school or completing their education, thus diminishing the potential contribution they can make to society (Brendar, 2010). The social effects of Boko Haram attacks have both symbolic and ideological effects on education which exacerbate the physical effects. According to Vernor (2009), the special reporter on the right to education argued that the symbolic effect is the promulgation of fear, subordination to others and the ideological effects is the removal of right to education and the denial of its purpose.

Boko Haram terrorism has resulted into crises which affected majority of the people in the area. It does occur on a personal or societal level by causing personal trauma, which affects individual's experience of a situation or event in which he/she perceives to have exhausted his/her coping skill, self-esteem, social support and power. These are situations where by a person makes suicidal threats, experiences threat, witnesses homicide, suicide or experience personal loss. It was an Italian theoretical physicist, Enrico Fermi (1901 – 1954) who pointed out that "it is not good to stop been knowledgeable because ignorance is not better than knowledge". The reverse of this saying is in vogue in Nigeria today through the terrorism caused by activities of Boko Haram group.

It is anticipated that through education, every society attempts to preserve and upgrade the accumulated knowledge, skills and attitude in its cultural setting and heritage in order to foster continuously the well-being of mankind and guarantee its survival against the unpredictable. Education equips individuals with knowledge, abilities, skills or behaviour to enable them function in their immediate environment and the society at large. The attack of Boko Haram have heightened serious fears among the Nigerian populace, especially those

in Borno and Yobe States (Russell, 2014). The trend has led to loss of lives and properties, while tertiary, secondary and primary institutions have remained closed and it has succeeded in reducing literacy rate in the affected areas.

Additionally, the counselor should assist the victim(s) in problem solving within the context of their situation and feelings. This is necessary for developing self-efficacy and self-reliance. Helping the victims get back to being able to function independently by actively facilitating problem solving, assisting in developing appropriate strategies for addressing those concerns and in helping putting those strategies into action. This is done with the hope of assisting the victim to become self-reliant.

### **Boko Haram Insurgency: Its Effects on Adult Education**

Nigeria, like any other country of the world recognizes the invaluable roles of education on development, hence, took it as a national governmental venture as National Policy on Education of Federal Republic of Nigeria, (FRN, 2014) states that education in Nigeria is no more a private enterprise but a large government venture that has witnessed a progressive evolution of governmental intervention and active participation.

Adult education is a major means of sharing the latest and most pertinent knowledge with people and through it, human resources can be developed to match effectively what seems an available of technological improvement. The activities of any given society are managed by adult members of such society, be it at community or national level. For such adult members to effectively carry out community or national tasks delegated to them, they need to acquire knowledge, skills, competencies and values to be reliant in the society (This Day Live, 2012).

The more educated adult members of a society are, the better the society will be. Education of the adult group is vital to any development process. The development trends of the world reveal that leading industrial nations lay much importance on adult education. Kareem (1991) rightly noted that no society can develop unless there are efficient men and women who can operate her social institutions. Educating adults differ from educating children in several ways. One of the most important differences is that adults have accumulated

knowledge and experience that can add to or hinder the learning experience.

The current Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria is threatening to halt or even reverse this progress, while education is under attack in Northern Nigeria. Since the beginning of 2012, according to Amnesty International's research, about 70 teachers and over 1000 school children have been killed or wounded. About 50 schools have either been burnt or seriously damaged and more than 60 others have been forced to close down. 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 North-east, and according to the Nigeria Union Teachers (NUT), more than 1000 teachers have been forced to flee from the areas in the North since 2012.

The threat to education from Boko Haram attack should be seen in the context of the wider problem of the impact of conflict in general on the poor state of education or prevention of educational development. The immediate impact of attacks include the loss of, injury to, or abduction of students, teachers and personnel and damage of buildings and facilities most typically due to the burning, bombing or shelling of buildings or transport facilities by Boko Haram. For instance, the officials in charge of the education system closed 85 schools in North-eastern Borno, which affected nearly 120,000 students, after a spate of attacks by Islamic militants, in an area that has the country's worst literacy rate (Ugwamba and Odom, 2015).

More than 200 school girls were kidnapped on the night of 14th April, 2014, and these attacks have forced the affected state governments to close down schools and colleges for prolonged periods. This is an area that is reckoned to be educationally poor-performing even by Nigeria standards. Low school enrolment- especially of girls, low retention rates, high number of out of school children and grinding poverty already characterized Northern Nigeria (The Guardian, 2014). The schools' closure could have far reaching consequences, including ending the education of some students in a region where few ever have the opportunity to get to high school (Ugwamba and Odom, 2015).

**Conclusion**

The more educated adult members of a society are, the better the society will be. The issue of Boko Haram insurgency has been connected to inadequate and poor delivery of education to the youths in North-east of Nigeria, particularly those in Yobe and Borno States. However, Adult education as a major means of sharing pertinent knowledge has been affected as well. Adult members could not efficiently carry out community or national tasks delegated to them, and they could not acquire knowledge, skills, competencies and values.

The present situation calls for urgent intervention from the whole nation but the responses so far do not say anything specific about children and adolescents of school-going age who are vulnerable and also part of the displaced population. This is a great challenge that could prolong the problem of insurgency.

**Recommendations**

The following are recommended as prospective solutions to the Boko Haram insurgency.

- There is need for the governments at all levels to pay attention to Adult education by allocating adequate fund to education particularly in the Northeast Nigeria. Youth need to be educated before security can be maintained in Nigeria particularly in the Northeast Nigeria that is noted for insurgency.
- There is need for Adult education programmes through mass media such as radio and television which would serve as one of the measures in enlighten adults with respect to dangers attached to Boko - Haram matters.
- Youth should be provided with free Adult education services. They should be allowed to go to school in order to be sensitized of danger of insurgency. This would prevent high rate of illiteracy in the area concerned and help them in sensing the danger involved in their participation in insurgency.
- There is need to prevent re-occurrence of recent insurgency by ensuring that appropriate and standard security strategies are applied through effective national planning. The federal government should take effective and lawful measures to prevent unlawful killings, particularly those of teachers and



students, as well as attacks on schools by Boko Haram and other armed groups in Northern Nigeria.

- The victims of Boko Haram insurgency should be compensated such that those that were affected by Boko Haram insurgency should be rehabilitated in new environment. This would make them to start a new life afresh and move forward.
- Youths that are unemployed should be employed by the government. Majority of those involved in the insurgency are youths and are mostly jobless.
- The federal government on her part should provide adequate support to the affected states to expeditiously rebuild and renovate all school buildings and facilities destroyed during the attacks. The State government should provide all necessary support to teachers and students, who have been affected by violence in Northeast Nigeria. This should include rehabilitation and resettlement for those who have been forced to flee the violence.

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