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## Terrorism in Northern Nigeria: An Appraisal of Its Impact on the Educational System

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### ABSTRACT

The work examined terrorism and its impact on Education in Northern Nigeria. This study investigated how the rate of kidnapping and killing of school students and teachers in the Northern Nigeria has negatively affected the educational system. It also examined the level of attack on educational facilities in the North and how the Boko Haram sect has used schools as bases of its operation. Lastly, the study investigated the responses of the Nigerian government to protect school children, teachers and educational facilities from attack. The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the general systems theory. The study is descriptive in nature. It dwells primarily on secondary sources of data, namely, textbooks, journal articles, newspaper publications and the internet. The technique of analysis adopted is content analysis. The study found that Boko Haram has killed and kidnapped thousands of school children and teachers. The study also found that the sect has destroyed several educational facilities. The study further found that both Boko Haram and government forces have used several schools as their base of operation. All these have disrupted learning in the North. From the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made; the government should endeavor to find out the root cause of Boko Haram insurgency and why youths are being recruited easily to the terror group. Adequate security be made available to protect students and schools in the North so that children can continue their schools uninterrupted. Since poverty has been the number one harbinger of Boko Haram insurgency, efforts must be made to reduce the rate of poverty in the region. The Nigerian government must embark on effective poverty alleviation and human capital development programs for youth who are most vulnerable to recruitment and radicalization.

**KEYWORDS:** Terrorism, kidnapping, education, Northern Nigeria, ransom.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Terror activities have affected all facets of human life in Nigeria, especially in the Northern part of Nigeria. In the North East, Boko Haram has made life unbearable for people living in that region. Since Boko Haram started over ten years ago, several lives have been lost due to the activities of this fundamentalist sect. Although religious extremism is not new to Northern Nigeria, because during the mid-80s a group now as the Maitasine also struck in the North killing and maiming thousands of people mostly Christians. The idea behind Maitasine is similar to that of Boko Haram, complete opposition to western education and culture. More importantly, the Boko Haram sect seems to have adopted the same *modus operandi* with another jihadist extremist group such as ISIS (Islamic State), ISWAP (Islamic State of West Africa) and Al Qaeda. ISWAP has proven to be equally dangerous in the Sahel and West African sub-region. In North Central and North West, there is an ever increasing rate of banditry which started as herders/farmers clash. These terrorist groups carry out incessant killings, kidnapping, rape, destruction of properties and farmlands. On a whole, these activities have become a stumbling block on decent living and the ability of people to go about their normal businesses. Most recently, the terror groups have targeted school kids in order to obtain funds through ransom to restock their cache of firearms. As a result, most parents have withdrawn their kids from school in order to prevent their being kidnapped for ransom by bandits and terror groups.

Alapiki (2015, p.2) points out, "terrorism is perhaps the most challenging problem of our time, nationally and internationally". He emphatically noted that, "the world has lost its innocence, not that there was much innocence earlier, but whatever there was, none seems to exist now" (Alapiki, 2015, p.3). Similarly, Rourke (2008, p.13) remarks that, "terrorism and other forms of transnational violence are in many ways more threatening today than ever before".

For the purpose of brevity, this study seeks to investigate the effects of insecurity caused by terror activities on education in Northern Nigeria. Prior to this time, Boko Haram had limited their insurgency to engaging the Nigerian army, but of recent a new dimension has been added to its activities, which is the kidnapping of school children for ransom. This strategy has worked very well for the group as it has become a good source of generating money for the group to purchase arms and ammunition. Boko Haram has been involved in the kidnapping of hundreds of school children in numerous occasions. This new dimension to terrorism is the primary focus of this study. In certain cases, Boko Haram even destroys school buildings, thereby forcing school children not

to attend school for a long period of time. In this connection, (Onapajo, 2021) avers that the attack on schools corresponded with the central ideology driving terrorism in the region, which is based on opposition to Western education. The increased attacks showed the plan was to make the region insecure for teaching and learning.

One of the consequences of terror activities in the North especially Northeast is that it usually lead to the displacement of millions people.. Some are internally displaced in their own States or in Neighboring states. While others are refugees in Neighboring countries such as Cameroun and Niger Republic. Children whose parents have been displaced are also denied the opportunity to proper education. What is more troubling is the recruitment of school children as suicide bombers. There are also reports of University students who were brainwashed to join Boko Haram, but the most vulnerable to Islamic radicalization are children from poor homes attending Quranic schools.

In March, 2021, for instance, authorities in Kano and Yobe states ordered more than 20 schools to shut down because of insecurity. Some schools were also closed in Zamfara and Niger states. In Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states, dozens of schools have been shut down for years because of the Boko Haram insurgency. For a region with a high rate of out-of-school children, this is a massive disruption to gains that have been recorded in recent years, but made worse by last year's restrictions imposed because of Covid-19 pandemic (Orjinmo, 2021).

According to UNICEF, there is a net attendance rate of just 53% in primary schools in Northern Nigeria though education at that level is free and compulsory. The levels for girls are even lower because of socio-cultural norms and practices that discourage attendance in formal education, (Orjinmo, 2021). Dozens of schools Northern Nigeria were bombed or set on fire by violent extremists, killing hundreds of students, teachers, and other education personnel. The University of Maiduguri, for example, was targeted repeatedly. Schools were used as barracks for weapons caches, and detention and killing centers. Hundreds of students were abducted from classrooms, particularly girls, many of whom were then forced into marriage, particularly the case of the Chibok girls (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2018).

This study sets out to investigate how the rate of killing and kidnapping of school students and teachers in the North East Nigeria affects education. It also examines the level of attack on educational facilities in the North East and how the Boko Haram sect and government forces have used schools as bases of operation. Lastly, the study investigates the responses of the Nigerian government to protect school children, teachers and educational facilities from attack.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This study is descriptive in nature. It dwells primarily on secondary sources of data, namely, textbooks, journal articles, newspaper publications and the internet. The technique of analysis adopted is content analysis.

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Concept of Terrorism

"There is neither an academic nor an international legal consensus" says Alapiki "regarding the definition of the term terrorism". (Alapiki, 2015) According to him, "various governments and agencies adopt different definitions". While recognizing this lack of consensus, Rourke (2008:316) sees terrorism as "violence carried out by individuals, nongovernmental organizations, or covert government agents or units that specifically target civilians; uses clandestine attack methods, such as car bombs and hijacked airliners and attempts to influence politics".

Kegley and Blanton (2011) noted that terrorism is "premeditated violence perpetuated against noncombatant targets by subnational or transnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience". Similarly, Hoffman (2006) avers that terrorism is the premeditated, deliberate, systematic murder, mayhem, and threatening of the innocent to create fear and intimidation in order to gain a political or tactical advantage, usually to influence an audience.

Hoffman (2006) explains that in its broadest sense, it is defined as the use of violence or threatened use of violence (terror) in order to achieve a political, religious, or ideological aim. In modern times, terrorism is considered a major threat to society and therefore illegal under anti-terrorism laws in most jurisdictions. It is also considered a war crime under the laws of war when used to target non-combatants, such as civilians, neutral military personnel, or enemy prisoners of war.

### The Concept of Education

Etymologically, the word education is derived from educare (Latin) "bring up", which is related to educere "bring out", "bring forth what is within", "bring out potential" and ducere, "to lead". Education in the largest sense is any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character or physical ability of an individual. In its technical sense, education is the process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills and

values from one generation to another (National Council of Educational, 2014).

According to Amadi (2014, p.29) "it is generally assumed that the educational system is the formal means through which the values of society are preserved, modified and transmitted to succeeding generations". Elsewhere, he adds that "education is very vital for the transformation of society from a state of being generally considered as backward underdeveloped, to a state of general progress" (Amadi, 2014, p.35).

## IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the general systems theory developed by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy. Alapiki (2010, p.58) avers that "the concept of the general systems theory is generally traced to the natural sciences, especially biology". The word "system" according to Alapiki (2010, p.58-59) "involves the following elements: a set of connected things or parts; a set of objects together with relations between the objects and between their attitudes; an inter-dependence of parts and a boundary of some kind between the system and its environment, etc".

Das and Choudhury (as cited by Alapiki, 2010) maintain that;

The first necessary mark of a system is that it contains separate distinguishable units. The units interact in order to perform certain functions, due to the element of inter-relatedness between the units, the system consists of mutually constraining of conditioning units, which involves regularities of relationship. From the perspective of systems theory, we can say that societies and other social groups can be seen as entities (systems) functioning within an environment (p.59).

This theory is applicable in this study because it explains the interrelatedness of different aspects of the Nigerian society and how terrorism by Boko Haram has affected the educational system. Adequate learning, cannot take place in a conflict ridden environment where people live in fear as their lives are directly or indirectly threatened by terrorists. Northern Nigeria has been plagued by terror activities since 2009. Attacks, whether directed at institutions of learning or other sectors of society disrupt the educational sector.

## V. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The point has been made elsewhere in this work that the central ideology of the Boko Haram sect is the eradication of western education. Having that in mind, members of the sect have killed and kidnapped thousands of school children and teachers in the North East. This is done with a view to halt school activities. The table below lucidly demonstrates such cases.

**Table 1: Selected cases of school students/teachers killed and kidnapped by Boko Haram in the North East**

Year	School attacks	Number of students/teachers kidnapped or killed.
2013	On March 18, 2013, unknown gunmen reportedly shot and killed at least three teachers and seriously injured three students in simultaneous attacks in four government-run schools in Maiduguri, Borno state, according to Amnesty International and media sources	Six killed
2013	on June 17, 2013, unidentified gunmen reportedly killed nine students who were taking exams in a school in Maiduguri, Borno state	9 killed
2013	midnight raid of a dormitory in Gujba, Yobe State in September.	44 schoolboys killed
2013	Five months later, <u>another boarding school</u> was attacked,	and 59 boys were murdered in the same state
2014	In <u>April 2014</u> , in Chibok in Borno State.	276 schoolgirls were abducted
2014	On November 10, 2014, a suicide bomber dressed as a student detonated a bomb during a school assembly at the Government Science and Technical College in Potiskum, Yobe state. According to Human Rights Watch, the explosion killed 26 students and inflicted minor to grave injuries on an additional 81 students	26 students killed
February 18, 2018	Nearly 110 schoolgirls are kidnapped by Boko Haram terrorists in Dapchi town of Yobe State. <u>February 20, 2018</u> : The	110 students kidnapped

Source: compiled by researcher

The table above shows the rate of killing and kidnapping of school students by Boko Haram in the North East. These terror activities have disrupted the efficient functioning of the educational sector in that part of the country. Although, the kidnap of the Chibok girls by the Boko Haram extremist group was the first notable and published school girls kidnap, since then the kidnapping of school children seems to have become a very lucrative business for other criminal gangs who have seen kidnapping of school children as an easy way to make money from parents and government. There is, however, a fundamental change in the motive behind kidnap of school children. The motive for Boko Haram was due to dislike for western education, while the current kidnapping going on in north west and north central Nigeria is due to economic reasons. According to Nduka of the BBC network news (2021), the kidnapping of school children became a lucrative business in northern Nigeria because of the publicity it gathers and the involvement of government in the negotiation, which could mean millions of dollars in ransom payment. Similarly, Iyora Festus of Aljazeera (2021) noted that since December 2020, gangs of bandits seeking lucrative ransom have kidnapped a total of 769 students. With all these kidnapping going on in the north, many schools have been short down by the government, while many parents have decided to withdraw their children from school, thereby increasing the number of school drop out rate.

**Figure: Chibok school girls kidnapped by Boko Haram in 2014**



Source: Cleven, E and Curtis, S, 2015

Apart from killing and kidnapping, Boko Haram has been actively engaged in the destruction of educational facilities. Below is a list to some of such attacks.

**Table 2: Selected cases of destruction of educational facilities by Boko Haram in the North East**

S/N	School attacks	Year
1	On March 11, 2013, unidentified attackers set fire to Gwange I Primary School in Maiduguri city, Borno state, burning it down. Unidentified attackers reportedly set fire to Gwange III Primary School in the same city two days later	2013
2	A local media source reported that on March 23, 2013, persons believed to be members of Boko Haram burned down three private schools in Biu town, Borno state, at night	2013
3	The UN, international media sources, and the US Department of State reported that on July 6, 2013, members of Boko Haram attacked and burned down a secondary school in Mamudo, Yobe state, during the day, killing at least 29 male students and one teacher. Human Rights Watch reported that Boko Haram had previously threatened to kill students found at the school	2013
4	Human Rights Watch reported that on September 6, 2013, Boko Haram bombed the science laboratory at the Government Secondary School Gajera and the principal's house, before abducting the principal and capturing six students. Boko Haram members forced students to point out the homes of teachers and local education administrators in the village, then killed the teachers they found and destroyed their teaching certificates. They then abducted one of the students and killed the other five	2013
5	According to media sources, unidentified assailants set fire to a residential building for education personnel at a girls' secondary school in Yana, Bauchi state, on the night of April 20, 2014,	2014
6	News outlets reported that unidentified assailants razed two primary schools in Shedarki and Yelwan Darazo villages, Bauchi state, on the night of May 14, 2014.	2014
7	News sources reported that on September 7, 2014, Boko Haram members destroyed a school when they attacked Buratai town, Borno state	2014
8	In November 2014, Boko Haram fighters stormed a school in Chikide, Borno state, and set classrooms on fire, burning eleven children and three teachers to death. They also abducted several women and children in the same attack	2014

Source: compiled by researcher

The table above shows the rate of destruction of school facilities in the North East. These attacks are in line with Boko Haram's cardinal ideology, which is the rejection of western education. With this sentiment in mind, they set out to establish a Fulani caliphate with Sharia laws.

**Figure: Children look through a destroyed class window at Yerwa Primary School, Maiduguri, Borno State, damaged by Boko Haram.**

Source: Human Rights Watch, 2016

Nigerian girls in the Northern city of Maiduguri stand amid the rubble of their school, which was destroyed by Boko Haram



Source: Archer, 2014

**Table 3: Boko Haram and government forces used schools and universities as detention centers and military bases**

S/N	Year	Incidences of school occupation by Boko Haram and government forces
1	May, 2014	In Gwoza children stopped going to school in May 2014 after members of Boko Haram occupied and transformed the school into a base, before burning it down three weeks later.
2	2014	Human Rights Watch documented two cases of military use of schools by Boko Haram in Bama, Borno state, in 2014. In one case, members of the group used schoolbooks to make fires; in the other, they shot kidnapping victims in the dormitories
3	February 2014	Government security forces take over school in Bama, Borno state in February 2014
4	April and June, 2014	The UN documented an incident of national security forces using the Government Day Secondary School in Ngoshe, Borno state, as a barracks and detention center for two months between April and June 2014

5	on November 24, 2014	at least 300 students from Zanna Mobarti Primary School in Damasak were locked inside the school grounds by Boko Haram for several months while using the school as a military base. Many other women and children they abducted from across town were brought there as captives.
6	February 2015	Boko Haram attacked Euga Primary School in Bauchi state and then used it for military purposes, which affected the education of 800 school children in February 2015, according to the UN
7	February 2016	Human Rights Watch documented the presence of government security forces and military hardware in at least two schools in Goniri, Yobe state. The soldiers had reportedly been in the schools in March 2015
8	April 2016	government security forces used three schools in Maiduguri and Chibok, Borno state
9	July 2016	local media reported that a school in Adamawa state had previously been used as a Boko Haram base

Source: Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2018

Boko Haram and government forces used schools and universities as detention centers and military bases.

### Responses by the Nigerian Government to protect school children

A "Safe School Initiative" was launched after the Chibok girls were abducted to bolster security in schools in North-Eastern Nigeria by building fences around them. At least \$20m (\$14m) was pledged for the three-year project, which was supported by the United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education, Gordon Brown, the former UK prime minister. Many container schools were built as temporary learning spaces as part of the scheme, but it is not known if any fences were built in communities affected (Orjinmo, 2021).

The Safe Schools Initiative (SSI) is a response to children and schools affected by militants in the North Eastern States of Nigeria. The program was launched by the Government of Nigerian and the UN Special Envoy for Global Education, Gordon Brown, alongside with the Nigerian Global Business Coalition for Education and private sector leaders in Abuja in May 2014 (Shana, 2015).

The Safe School Initiative entails a combination of:

- 1) transfer of secondary students to other states
- 2) support to education in IDP camps
- 3) pilot safe schools models including community mobilization.

The initiative was initially implemented in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states, already in a declared state of emergency.

The Government of Nigeria has established a national Safe Schools Fund to accommodate capitalization from the Federal Government, Private Sector, and grants from donors. This national fund is to be complemented by the establishment of the Nigeria Safe Schools Initiative Multi-Donor Trust Fund (Nigeria SSI MDTF) also for donors for matching co-financing and implementation of activities pertaining to the initiative (Shana, 2015).

Despite these efforts Boko Haram has continued to attack schools which has thrown the educational sector in North East into a state of confusion. This has led to the withdrawal of millions of school children from school. This is more troubling in a region that has the lowest literacy rate in the country.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Terror activities of Boko Haram and other armed groups in Northern Nigeria have affected all facets of life including the educational sector. This is not hard to decipher since the central ideology of the sect is the opposition western education. Boko Haram has killed and kidnapped thousands of students and teachers in a bid to achieve their objective of getting rid of the present educational system. Beyond these, the terror group has destroyed school facilities and layed siege on institutions of learning. Apart from the fact that Boko Haram Islamic extremist group that laid the foundation for kidnapping of school children in the North, other armed groups such as bandits and Fulani herdsmen have also joined in the kidnap and killing of school children. It is pertinent to mention that while Boko Haram kidnap of the Chibok girls was motivated by religious extremist ideology, the current trend of kidnapping of school children going on in the north appears to be driven by economic motive, because even children from Islamic schools have been victims of kidnap by armed criminal groups. The overall impact of these insecurity situation in the north is that many children have been forced out of school, thereby increasing the disparity in school attendance rates between children of the poor and wealthy parents.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) The government should endeavor to find out the root causes of Boko Haram insurgency and why youths are being recruited easily to the terror group.
- 2) Adequate security should be made available to protect students and schools in the North so that they do not become easy target of armed criminal gangs.

- 3) Since poverty has been the number one harbinger of Boko Haram insurgency and bandits, efforts must be made to reduce the rate of poverty in the region. The Nigerian government must embark on effective poverty alleviation and human capital development programs for youth who are most vulnerable to recruitment and radicalization.
- 4) The government should improve school enrolment in the region to address the issue of illiteracy in the area. High levels of illiteracy in Nigeria contribute to young people becoming more easily susceptible to manipulation and recruitment into extremist groups.
- 5) Monitor and regulate religious preaching. Given that independent, roaming preachers are key purveyors of distorted religious teachings, there is a need to regulate and monitor it in Nigeria.

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