

Insecurity in Northern Nigeria and Its Impact on the Education of the Populace

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on insecurity in Northern Nigeria and its impact on the education of the populace. Bandits, terrorists, killer herdsmen and unknown gunmen hold sway over Northern parts of Nigeria. Their nefarious activities cause havoc in several quarters of Northern Nigeria. In course of their activities, they injure, maim, kill and abduct people as well as burn houses and utterly destroyed property resulting in sack of some villages/communities. The education institutions were not spared in the attacks. The study objective is to ascertain the specific schools attacked, determine government strategies to forestall further attacks, and to find out the impact of the attacks on education of the populace. The study found that schools attacked inter alia include G.G.S.S. Chibok, G.G.S.T.C. Dapchi, G.S.S.S. Kangara, University of Maidugiri etc. Government's strategies to forestall further attacks include the launch of Safe School Initiative, President Buhari's order of "No Fly Zone" in Zamfara State among others. Concerning the impact of insecurity, the academic calendar has been altered, it has increased the number of out-of-school children, and academic achievement/attainment is hampered. It was however recommended among other things that military personnel should be deployed to schools, intelligence units of the Police and military should be reinvigorated, the National Orientation Agency should rise up to the occasion of enlightenment and sensitization of the populace.

Key Words: Insecurity, impact, education, populace, northern Nigeria.

I. INTRODUCTION

Incidents of insecurity are on the rise in Nigeria especially in northern part of Nigeria. Gunmen armed to the teeth often terrorize and attack the inhabitants of northern Nigeria. The gunmen are not clearly known. Some are called bandits, some are called Boko Haram, others called

Islamic states of West African Province (ISWAP), yet others are regarded as killer herdsmen and some are recognized as unknown gunmen.

Irrespective of whatever identity or name borne by the criminals, they unleashed their nefarious activities on the dwellers of northern Nigeria. The trend is that the attacks are so frequent that people do not sleep with their two eyes closed. Giving credence to the above assertion, it has been stated as follows:

From Borno, Niger, Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Yobe, Adamawa, Taraba, Benue, Plateau, Nasarawa States to FCT - Abuja, nowhere is safe for Nigerians to move freely without fear of being kidnapped or robbed. This is not news anymore. It is a national and international scandal hanging on Nigeria (Editorial 2022, p.3).

From the excerpt above, it could be deduced that communities, villages and towns are attacked. Invariably, when attacks of terrorists or bandits occur, it leaves many people injured, maimed, abducted and dead. What is worrisome is that the schools are not spared and as they attack or terrorize, students and teachers are abducted. The above assertion is lent credence as follows:

It is no longer news that banditry especially in the North-west has become rampant with no end in sight. Every day, the trending and horrific news is abduction of defenseless villagers or passengers on transit. In recent times, bandits have shifted ground, becoming more audacious attacking our schools and abducting students in their hundreds. (Mustapha, 2021, p.12).

It is rather pathetic that education institutions (schools) and the primary stakeholders (teachers and pupils/students) also become victims of the insurgency or bandits on a very high magnitude. In line with the above claim, the Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF, Mr. Justin Forsyth stated as was reported by Education (2018, p.18) that "since 2009, across the North-East, over 2,295 teachers had so far been killed, with 19,000 displaced. Almost 1,400 schools had been

destroyed with the majority unable to open due to massive damage or insecurity in the areas". To this end, this paper sets out to identify specifically some of the schools attacked in the northern Nigeria, government's strategies to forestall further attacks on schools and effects of insecurity on education in northern Nigeria.

Some Specific Schools Attacked In Northern Nigeria

It was mind-boggling news that Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok was attacked by Boko Haram on the night of 14-15 April, 2014. Chibok is a town in Bornu State which is in the North - Eastern Nigeria. Boko Haram which was later declared terrorists by the Nigeria Government have been unleashing mayhem on the inhabitants of Northern Nigeria. On that fateful day April 14, 2014 the Boko Haram stormed the Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok and kidnapped 276 female students. The students were aged between 16 and 18 years. Though some of the girls have regained their freedom but over 100 of those female students are yet to be found.

While the chibok school abductees were yet in captivity, on Monday February 19, 2018, Boko Haram struck the Government Girl's Science and Technical College (GGSTC), Dapchi in Yobe State and abducted 110 girls (students). The Federal Government on Sunday 25th February 2018 confirmed the abduction of 110 girls from the school by Boko Haram terrorists. Onani (2018, p.2) observed that "the abduction is reminiscent of the April 14, 2014 kidnap of over 200 students of Government Girl's Secondary School, Chibok, Yobe State".

In another development, not less than five schools within three months were attacked in northern Nigeria. The attacks were carried out in such states as katsina, Zamfara and Kaduna States in the North-West, and in the North-central, only Niger state. Indeed gunmen invaded Federal College of Forestry Mechanization, Afaka in Kaduna State and abducted 39 students, 23 males and 16 females. Another attempt to abduct students of Government Science Secondary School, Ikara Kaduna state but was foiled by the military and security volunteers who engaged the hoodlums in a gun duel. Also in Zamfara state, hoodlums invaded Government Girls Secondary School, Jangebe in Talata Marafa Local Government Area and kidnapped 279 students, though they were released after some few days.

Meanwhile in Niger State, the criminals attacked Government Science School, Kagara, killed a student and abducted 27 others as well as some teachers and their family members. However, the intervention by Sheikh Ahmad Gumi who mediated between the state government and the kidnappers resulted in their release after about a week. In the same vein, the bandits made their way into Government Science Secondary School, Kankara and abducted 344 students on 11th December, 2020. This Kankara is in Katsina State which is the home state of the incumbent president of Nigeria, President Muhammadu Buhari. In fact, no sooner did President Muhammad Buhari arrived Daura, his home town on a one-week break than the bandits struck. The students were however, released after six days of captivity. On 15th March, 2021 at 8:50am there occurred another incident of invasion of school by bandits. They invaded Rema Primary School, Magajin Gari Ward 2, of Birnin Gwari Local Government Area of Kaduna State. During the invasion, three teachers were kidnapped which include Umar Hassan, Bala Adamu and Rabi Salisu. The invasion made the pupils run helter skelter resulting in the missing of two pupils identified as Ahmad Halilu and Kabiru Yahaya. The two pupils missing were however found (Lawal, Samson, Tukuru and Aodu, 2021).

In yet another development, on 20th July, 2017, University of Maiduguri was attacked by bandits suspected to be members of the Boko Haram sect. The terrorist group abducted three staff of the University of Maiduguri including a senior lecturer. Before this incidence, the bandits on 20th June, 2017 kidnapped nine girls. It is however a sigh of relief that the Department of State services (DSS) secured their release on February 10, 2018. The abductees met with President Muhammadu Buhari on 26th February, 2018 at the Presidential villa, Abuja. Present during the meeting were Dr. Yusuf Jummai Ibrahim, Esther Wazari Kwasina, Amina Adams Gomdiya, Gloria Bulus, Paulina Amos, Tani Audu and a final year student in the University of Maiduguri. During the meeting with President Buhari, the Director General of the DSS, Alhaji Lawal Daura confirmed that the agency went through a difficult process in getting all the abductees released. The DSS boss informed that government chose the option of negotiations because it was considered as the safest. Any forceful attempt to rescue the victims could endanger their lives (Emmanuel, 2018).

The attacks on schools is not a recent development though it could be regarded as

happening on a higher scale. The military had often been fingered as being the cause of successful operation of the bandits. The fact that civilians live in dread of Boko Haram or bandits and the said bandits, Boko Haram/terrorists are dreadful of the military is a case in point. Giving credence to the above, the Governor of Yobe State, Ibrahim Geidam posited thus

The military must take blame for the attack on Dapchi. The same thing happened in 2013 when the military suddenly removed troop guarding the town and a week later; Boko Haram went there to attack Buni-Yadi and the secondary school there, killing 29 students. (Onani, 2018, p.2)

Government's Strategy to Forestall Further Attacks by Bandits or Terrorists on Schools

On considering the level of insecurity or attacks on schools and the rate of abductions or kidnappings, especially in the northern parts of Nigeria the government decided to launch the safe school initiative. The Safe Schools Initiative (SSI) is a response to children and schools affected by militants in the North Eastern states of Nigeria. The unprecedented level of insurgency from 2009 led to the declaration of a State of Emergency' in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States in 2013. The Government of Nigeria in conjunction with the United Nations (UN) Envoy for Global Education, Gordon Brown as well as the Nigerian Global Business Coalition for Education and private sector leaders in Abuja launched the programme (Safe Schools Initiative) in May, 2014. The following are involved in the programme:

- (a) Transfer of secondary school students to other states,
- (b) Support to education in IDP camps,
- (c) Pilot safe schools models including community mobilization.

The programme was first carried out in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states which were among the States declared state of emergency in 2013. A national safe schools fund has been established by the Federal Government of Nigeria to take care of capitalization from the Federal Government, private sectors and grants from donors. The national fund is to be complemented by the establishment of the Nigeria Safe Schools Initiative Multi-Donor Trust Fund (Nigeria SSI MDTF) as well as for donors for matching co-financing and implementation of events associated with the initiative (Shaba, 2015).

The humanitarian and security situation is deteriorating to the extent that out of the estimated 11 million Nigerians inhabiting the three states then

under state of emergency, about six million have been affected by insecurity with four million people in Borno State alone.

Notwithstanding the launching of the Safe School Initiative meant to ensure safety of schools and students, the attacks on schools had continued unabated. Thus, concerned Nigerians have started to question the impact of the Safe School Initiative launched to ensure safety of students and schools. Whereas much money has been committed into this scheme but the expected result is far from being realized. The schools and students are still vulnerable which means that the Federal Government still need to strategize further to achieve the set objective of ensuring safety of lives and property of her populace especially schools and students (Lawal et al, 2021).

Other strategies to combat insecurity adopted by the President Muhammad Buhari led administration have been outlined by Ilallah (2021, p.11) as follows:

1. As a retired Army General, President Buhari moved into action by first directing security agencies to do all within their powers to rescue all the kidnapped school children, having provided needed logistical, financial and moral support. He also instructed that the use of kinetic and non kinetic approaches be employed to tackle the bandits.
2. The President declared Zamfara State, which the bandits and kidnappers have turned into their theatre command for years now, a "no fly zone" (NFZ). The reason for this approach was to halt the swap of gold for arms by bandits, illegal miners and other criminals. The Presidential order encompasses ban on all mining activities in all parts of Zamfara State.
3. The President convoked and presided a meeting of the National security Council where decisions to stop the operations of bandits was taken. As a follow up, the president directed the security chiefs to reclaim bandits' dominated areas across the states of the federation while warning non state actors against promoting insecurity in the counting.
4. To achieve the above, there was immediate deployment of military and intelligence assets to restore normalcy to the state and other parts of the country under siege and other criminal elements.

5. Another serious approach was that the President issued an order to security agents to shoot on sight anyone found to be in possession of AK 47 rifle and other firearms.
6. To conclude his step by step approach to giving bandits a deadly blow, President Buhari swore in the newly appointed service chiefs and urged them to identify competent officers to improve the security of the nation.
7. Finally, the President allayed the fears of security agents by making statements of responsibility as follows:

I have taken responsibility as commander - in - Chief for them to go out into the fields and every part of the country, to ensure peace and security and I have also accepted responsibility for all actions taken in fulfillment of the mandate to secure Nigeria (Ilallah, 2021, p.11).

Effects of Insecurity on Education in Northern Nigeria

The rate of insecurity has resulted in calls by well meaning citizens and organizations to suspend the boarding school system in Northern Nigeria. This became a topical issue at the instance of the abduction of about 110 school girls from the Government Girls' Technical and Science School, Dapchi, Yobe State. It is a truism that Yobe State is one of the States in Northern Nigeria. Giving Credence to the above abduction during a special valedictory court session held in honour of a retired female justice of the Supreme Court, Justice Clara Bata Ogunbiyi, clarion calls were made as follows:

President of the NBA, A. B. Mahmoud (SAN) called on the Federal Government to facilitate the safe return of the said girls. The Bar equally condemned the abduction of the Dapchi School girls. Mahmoud advised both the state and Federal governments to suspend boarding school system for girls in the region until the safety of all schools can be fully guaranteed. He lamented that the region as of today, is one of the most unsafe parts of the world for the education of female children. (Oyesina, 2018, p.5).

Similarly, the series of attack and abductions of our school children have caused consternation among parents and guardians. This scenario has resulted in parents' lost of enthusiasm for sending their wards to school. In support of the foregoing, UNICEF Communication Specialist, Mr. Geoffrey Njoku, in a statement on behalf of Mr. Peter Kawkins, UNICEF Representative in Nigeria to mark the year 2019 Day of the African

Child themed: Child Rights in all situations, including During Humanitarian Crisis, said parents are now so scared to send their children to school due to the high level of insecurity in the country (Akinrefon, Agbakwuru, Duru and Olowoaje, 2019).

In fact, insecurity has negatively affected the periods when schools should be in session. Most often, when bandits attack a community, such community and the neighbouring communities may run away for their dear lives. Such scenario no doubt affects the schools in such community or communities. In support of the above assertion, the Wazirin Katsina, Prof. San Lugga has lamented that banditry and insurgency have led to the closure of all schools and other institutions in eight Local Government Areas of Katsina State. He further intimated that two major roads in the State had been closed to vehicular movements due to the operations of the bandits and terrorists (Olufemi Oni, 2022).

Still on effects of the activities of bandits, insurgency or terrorists, especially on how their activities is affecting the school calendar and school enrolment, several concerned citizens have expressed their feelings in diverse ways. One of such persons that expressed his view is the Director Praxis Centre; Convener Take Back Nigeria Movement and Co-convener Say NO Campaign, Mr. Jaye Gaskia, views that the implications on education, on the overall development of the children and youth as well as on the economy and human capital development cannot be undermined. He further stated as follows:

Giving the pace at which bandits attack schools, government and private proprietors will be forced to shut down schools intermittently, and then for much longer. Parents on the other hand will also be reluctant to send their wards and children to school; while teachers and other caregivers will be reluctant to report for work. The overall consequences will be empty schools, and gap in the education of children (Lawal et al, 2021, p.6).

In what could be regarded as an addendum to the above except on schools being forced to shut down, the UNICEF Chief of Communications, Ms Doune Porter stated as follows:

Over 57 percent of schools in Bornu state are yet to reopen as they are still closed in the new school year, due to the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East Nigeria, with a record of estimated three million children in need of emergency education support (Education, 2018, p.18).

Insecurity also negatively affects both academic achievement and the level of educational attainment. According to Okeke (2002, p.69) school/academic achievement is considered to be “an individual’s performance in class tests as well as the level of education ultimately attained”. Northern part of Nigeria is characterized by insecurity and this permeates all institutions of learning as well as other sectors. The schools operate under a very high sense of insecurity, which is unhealthy for learning. This is in line with the view of the Head, Department of Chemistry Education, Kogi State University, Dr. Sarah Jumai Shaibu when she stated as follows:

The rising cases of kidnapping incidents at schools in Nigeria show how vulnerable schools in northern Nigeria have become for bandits and kidnappers. It means that kidnappers, bandits, terrorists or whatever name they are called, have declared war on the education sector in the North and in extension on the future of our students and country. When a teacher goes to school and is not guaranteed of his safety, it will affect his performance. Schools being shut down completely, will impact negatively on the education sector, the system. (Lawal et al, 2021 p.6).

From the excerpt above, it is glaring that a teacher’s performance could be affected by the level of insecurity in the area. Naturally, teachers’ performance go hand in hand with students’ performance. When the teachers are affected, the students are also affected and this could inadvertently affect the level of education ultimately attained. Lending more credence to the contention, the Executive Director, Yes Project, Oche Precious Edeh, viewed that Nigeria’s education sector is undoubtedly under attack, particularly in the North - West and North - central. He further posited as follows:

Students and teachers are no longer free to learn or teach without looking over their shoulders to see if bandits are coming. Under this kind of circumstances, students can’t learn well and teachers can’t teach well. It implies therefore that the future of our children and indeed education in this region is at risk. (Lawal, et al, p.6).

Indeed, one cannot exhaust the impact of insecurity on education in northern Nigeria, in any case it had led to increase in the number of out-of-school children and many others. For instance, the Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF, Mr. Justin Forsyth stated as was reported in Education (2018, p.18) that “since 2009, across the North-East, over

2,295 teachers had so far been killed, with 19,000 displaced. Almost 1,400 schools had been destroyed with the majority unable to open due to massive damage or insecurity in the areas”. The situation is so pathetic that comments were made as follows:

The negative effects of this development on our school system can only be imagined than easily explained. The Northeast is already on its knees. There are frenzied reviews of the incident and its implications on the already messed-up basic education system in Nigeria where about 13 million children are out-of-school roaming the streets, hawking, taking cattle for grazing on people’s farms etc. (Editorial, 2022, p.3).

II. CONCLUSION

Insecurity is quite an issue in northern Nigeria. Several schools have been attacked such as Government Girl’s secondary school Chibok, G.G.S.T.C. Dapchi, F.C.F.M. Afaka, G.G.S.S. Jangebe, G.S.S. Kagara, G.S.S.S Kangara etc. In order to forestall further attacks, the Government launched the Safe School Initiative, the President of Nigeria, President Muhammad Buhari ordered “No fly zone” in Zamfara and several marching orders to the military. The persistence of the insecurity has led to increase in the number of out-of-school children, academic calendar has been affected, there have been calls by well meaning Nigerians to suspend boarding school system in the northern Nigeria, and ultimately, academic achievement/attainment of the pupils and students are hampered.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the exposition and conclusion above the following were recommended:

- [1]. Intelligence units of the police and military should be reinvigorated to identify the whereabouts of the insurgents, bandits, terrorists etc.
- [2]. Dialogue should be employed.
- [3]. Security personnels should be deployed to schools.
- [4]. Ethnic and religious tolerance should be preached by religious leaders and taught in schools.
- [5]. National Orientation Agency (NOA) should rise up to the occasion of enlightenment and sensitization of the populace.
- [6]. Government should create employment opportunities or provide social security (welfare).

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