

**IMPACT OF INSURGENCY ON SCHOOL ENROLLMENT,
ATTRITION, RETENTION AND NATIONAL UNITY OF NIGERIA:
THE PERCEPTION OF PARENTS IN ANKPA TOWNSHIP,
KOGI STATE**

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Abstract

This paper examined the Perception of Parents on the Impact of Insurgency on School enrollment, Attrition, Retention and National Unity of Nigeria. The paper was a survey. It sampled 200 respondents obtained through purposive sampling procedure from the population of the literate Christians and Muslims found in their churches and mosques in Ankpa, urban. The study sought answers to five research questions on the perception of parents on the possible impact of insurgency on school enrolment, attrition and retention as well as national unity of Nigeria. The instrument for data collection was a four-point response questionnaire that the researchers personally constructed. The face validity of the instrument was ascertained from two (2) experts in the department of Educational Foundations, Kogi State University, Anyigba. The data collected were analyzed and the following results among others were obtained: parents perceived the impact of insurgency to be high and negative on school enrollment, attrition and retention. Communities that are frequently attacked by insurgents as perceived by parents experience reduction in pupils' enrollment and retention as well as experience increase in rates of attrition. Parents indicated unwillingness to enroll their children in schools, colleges and universities that are frequently attacked by insurgents and that insurgency was capable of disintegrating the unity of Nigeria. Based on these findings, recommendations that included good governance, teaching and learning of religious, moral and political education as well as improved security and national surveillance among others be put in place to tackle and reduce the spate of insurgency in Nigeria for a more harmonious coexistence.

Keywords: Insurgency, school enrollment, retention, attrition

Introduction

The unity and integration of Nigeria is seriously being threatened currently by insurgencies of diverse kinds and magnitudes. Insurgency according to Hornby

(2001) is an attempt to take control of a country by force. There are series of such attempts of late by political, ethnic and regional groups against the government of Nigeria. In the northeastern Nigeria for instance, many local government areas were taken over, and communities, schools and worship centers pulled down to rubbles and many lives were lost due to the activities of an Islamic sect called the “Boko Haram.” Boko Haram is literally translated to mean, “Western education/civilization is bad or evil.”

This sect is antagonistic on government and the general public. They are militant and very tactical in warfare and vehement on committing their atrocities in communities where they operate. This sect seemed indomitable as they have defied combined military and paramilitary oppositions from governments within and without the confines of the country. They have no respite for educational institutions as it is their target of attack alongside others. In fact, the memories of many Nigerians are still fresh about the school girls they abducted in Chibok on April 14, 2014 (Chibok is a community in Borno state in northeastern Nigeria where activities of Boko Haram are most vigorous). While Nigerians were yet to recover from this shock, a repeated act took place in Dapchi in Yobe state. From Government Girls Science and Technical College in this town, more than one hundred (100) students were abducted in February, 2018 (BBC, News, 2018). Due to the activities of this sect, many children of formal education have been forced to abandon school. All these are happening in regions noted to be ill-educated and disadvantaged (Umar and Terhemba, 2014). In fact, Bwala (2012) noted that 85 percent of school children in Borno state do not attend school due to insecurity in the state.

The activities of Boko Haram are not limited to Borno state. States like Yobe, Kano, Kaduna, Gombe, Adamawa, Nassarawa and even Kogi as well as Abuja, the federal capital city of Nigeria, have at various times had reported cases of attacks of these insurgents. Although their activities have not covered all the states of the federation, many Nigerians living in other states known to be relatively peaceful may not want to have anything to do with these states that are receiving frequent attacks from this group of dissidents and this could affect national unity and integration that is crucial for the growth and development of a pluralistic nation as Nigeria.

Apart from Boko Haram, there are the worrisome, gruesome and barbaric attacks on many Nigerian communities by the Fulani militia or mercenaries. The Fulani herdsmen had at several times and clandestinely too, invaded many communities and have left many dead, maimed and properties destroyed mercilessly. The activities of these dissidents seem to span through many communities in Nigeria but concentrated in the middle belt states such as Nassarawa, Benue, Taraba, and Kogi as well as some states in the eastern and western parts of the country. By the activities of these dissidents, many people who have survived their attacks have lost their means of livelihood; others have fled their communities either temporarily or permanently, while some others are afraid to go to farms and markets. Many school children have also been dislodged as well as thrown out of schools. Lives and properties are not safe for both the urban and rural dwellers and people live in apprehension almost every day (Omede and Omede, 2015).

In addition to the activities of Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen attacks, there are the frequent religious crises in the northern part of the country between the Muslims and the Christians and most times with reprisal attacks in the eastern and western regions of the country. All these have bad omen for the nation's education as well as its unity or integration. When there is insecurity in Nigeria, her educational growth and development will be hampered. For instance, Mudege and Zulu (2008) noted that insecure neighborhoods may have negative impact on schooling. Collaborating this, the United States Embassy in Nigeria (2012), in presenting "Nigeria Education Fact Sheet" noted that Nigeria has a large number of out-of-school children and young adults with limited literacy and numeracy skills and that non-school attendance is highest among states in the northeast and northwest zones. According to this "Education Fact Sheet" presented by United States Embassy in Nigeria, 72 percent of primary age children never attended school in Borno state. And Borno state as noted earlier is where the activities of insurgency are high. Umar and Terhemba (2014) found that the level of primary school attendance under the crises situation in Damaturu metropolis was low because according to them peace and tranquility is an antidote for a successful teaching and learning in any educational system. Security is a pillar upon which every meaningful development could be achieved and sustained (Nwanegbo and Odigbo, 2013).

One of the national goals of education enunciated in the constitution and restated by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2009) was the inculcation of national consciousness, values and national unity. Consequently, the Nigeria's philosophy of education was based on the belief that education is vital for the promotion of a progressive, united Nigeria (FRN, 2009). Education is undoubtedly, a potent force for national cohesion. Through the contents and processes of education, national consciousness and unity are communicated and developed in the learners who expectedly are the leaders of tomorrow. The nation's educational system makes provisions for students' exchange programs. This was part of the programs that "Unity schools" were established for. In unity schools, students from all the states of the federation have admission slots. The intention was to encourage integration, harmonious living and appreciation of the diversities of cultures of the people of Nigeria.

In addition to the establishment of unity schools, the successive efforts of the Federal Government of Nigeria to foster unity which the Nigerian Observer (2015) noted included National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme, the Federal Character Principle, National Sports and Cultural Festivals and the establishment of National Orientation Agency (NOA), among others. Irrespective of all these efforts, the paper reported that it is only the establishment of unity schools that have the potential for fostering the bond of unity among Nigerians. Yes, potential for national unity was one of the cardinal reasons for the establishment of these unity schools, but the worry of this paper was whether or not this could be achieved in this current Nigeria that is reeling in legions of security problems ranging from bombing of all kinds to kidnapping, hostage taking and suicide attacks. Will parents be willing to send their children to schools within the zones that are notoriously known for insurgencies and

other forms of rebellious agitations? This is why this study sought parents' perception on the possible Impact of Insurgency on School Enrollment, Attrition, Retention and National Unity of Nigeria was conceived and executed.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to find out parents' perception on the possible impact of insurgency on school enrollment, attrition, retention and national unity of Nigeria. Specifically, the study found out:

1. The perception of parents on the possible impact of insurgency on school enrollment, attrition and retention in Nigeria
2. The extent of parents' willingness to enroll their children in schools frequently attacked by insurgents
3. The extent of parents' willingness to retain their children in schools frequently attacked by insurgents
4. The extent that parents' are willing to allow their children accept the compulsory one year National Youth Service Corps assignment (NYSC) in communities frequently attacked by insurgents
5. The parents' perception on the possible impact of insurgency on national unity and integration

Research questions

The following questions were answered by the study:

1. What is the perception of parents as shown by their mean score on the possible impact of insurgency on school enrollment, attrition and retention in Nigeria?
2. What will be the perception of parents about their willingness to enroll their children in schools, colleges and universities where attacks of insurgents are frequent?
3. To what extent will the mean score of parents reflect their perceived willingness to retain their children in schools colleges and universities where attacks of insurgents are frequent?
4. What will the mean score of parents reflect on their perceived willingness to allow their children do their National Youth Service Corps program in communities where attacks of insurgents are frequent?
5. What is the perception of parents as shown by their mean score on the possible impact of insurgency on national integration and unity of Nigeria?

Methods

This study was a survey. It sought information from respondents (Parents of school going children) about the possible impact of insurgency on school enrollment, attrition, retention and national unity of Nigeria. A sample of two hundred (200) respondents was composed out of the married but literate men and women in Ankpa, township, Kogi state, Nigeria. The choice of literate married men and women was to enable them fill the questionnaire without an intermediary and again because they are

likely to be more informed about reported cases of insecurity in the country by the media. The instrument used to collect data for this study was a questionnaire personally constructed by the researchers. The questionnaire was split into two sections- A & B. Section A, fielded ten (10) questions on the possible impact of insurgency on school enrollment, attrition and retention. Section B, on the other hand, fielded eight (8) questions on the views of parents about their willingness to enroll in, retain or withdraw their children from schools where there are frequent attacks of insurgency, willingness to allow their NYSC in communities noted for incessant attacks as well as how insurgency could impact on the unity and integration of the country. The instrument was personally administered by the researchers thereby, eliminating the incidence of instrument mortality. The instrument was a likert type with four response options of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Mean and standard deviation statistical tools were used to analyze the responses. A mean score of 2.5 and above on an item showed that parents perceived insurgency to have negative impact on the variables examined while a mean score of below 2.5 was considered to have low impact.

Results

The analysis for this work was done according to the five (5) research questions asked.

Research question 1

What is the perception of parents as shown by their mean score on the possible impact of insurgency on school enrollment, attrition and retention in Nigeria?

The answer to this question is shown on table one.

Table 1: Perception of parents on the impact of insurgency on school enrollment, attrition and retention

S/N	ITEMS	SX	SD
1.	Due to insurgency, many school going children have died	3.2	0.94
2.	Due to insurgency, many pupils and students have withdrawn from schools and colleges	3.1	0.91
3.	Incessant attacks on schools have made pupils in crises communities to be afraid of going to school	3.2	0.94
4.	Many parents who have lost their means of livelihood due to insurgency will not be able to retain their wards in school	3.2	0.96
5.	The displacement of many families due to insurgency has thrown many children out of school	3.2	0.96
6.	Due to insurgency, many children in such crises areas have lost interest in school	3.0	0.95
7.	Pupils' enrollment into school will decline markedly in crises ridden areas in Nigeria	3.0	1.02
8.	Many school children who have lost their parents as a result of insurgency are out of school today	3.2	0.97
9.	Due to displacement of some families as a result of insurgency, many children who cannot connect with their parents cannot even think of going back to school	3.2	0.98
10.	Some children who were demobilized as a result of insurgency and are on medical support, may have difficulty returning to school	2.7	1.06

Source: Field survey, 2017; N= 200; Grand mean= 3.1

The analysis on table one shows that the parents perceived the impact of insurgency on school enrollment, attrition and retention in Nigeria to be negative and high. Each of the items had mean score that was above the acceptable mean of 2.5. The grand mean of 3.1 indicated that parents perceived insurgency to negative impact on school enrollment, attrition and retention.

Research question 2:

What will be the perception of parents about their willingness to enroll their children in schools, colleges and universities where attacks of insurgents are frequent?

Table 2 provided answer to this question.

Table 2: Perception of parents about their willingness to enroll their wards in schools frequently attacked by insurgents

S/N	ITEMS	SX	SD
11.	I don't think I can send my children to school, college and universities in communities attacked frequently by insurgents	3.3	1.04
12.	I will discourage my friends from sending their wards to schools in communities frequently attacked by insurgents	3.0	1.03

Source: Field survey, 2017; N = 200; Grand mean = 3.2

Table 2 above reported that parents are not willing to enroll their children in schools, colleges and universities where the activities of insurgents are frequent. They affirmed their willingness to even discourage their friends from sending their children to schools located in such crises ridden communities. The grand mean of 3.2 was greater than the acceptable mean of 2.5.

Research question 3:

To what extent will the mean score of parents reflect their perceived willingness to retain their children in schools colleges and universities where attacks of insurgents are frequent?

The analysis on table 3 provided the answer for this question.

Table 3: Parents' perception about their willingness to retain their children in schools frequently attacked by insurgents

S/N	ITEMS	SX	SD
13.	If I have my children in schools frequently attacked by insurgents, I will rather withdrawal than retain them there		

Source: Field survey, 2017; N = 200

The analysis on table 3 indicated that parents were willing to withdraw and not to retain their children should they happen to be schooling in communities attacked frequently by insurgents. The mean of 3.2 is greater than the acceptable mean of 2.5.

Research question 4:

What will the mean score of parents reflect on their perceived willingness to allow their children do their National Youth Service Corps program in communities where attacks of insurgents are frequent?

The data collected to answer this question were analyzed on table 4.

Table 4: Parents perception on their willingness to allow their children to do NYSC in communities attacked frequently by insurgents

S/N	ITEMS	MX	SD
14.	I will reject that my child be posted to communities frequently attacked by isulgents for NYSC assignment	3.1	1.02

Source: Field survey, 2017, N = 200

Table 4 analysis showed that parents would reject posting of their children for NYSC assignment in communities attacked frequently by insurgents ($X=3.1 > 2.5$).

Research question 5:

What is the perception of parents as shown by their mean score on the possible impact of insurgency on national integration and unity of Nigeria?

The answer to this question is shown on table 5.

Table 5: Perception of parents on the possible impact of insurgency on national integration and unity of Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	MX	SD
15	Many Nigerian youths may not seek admission to universities, colleges and polytechnics situated in areas frequently attacked by insurgents	3 . 1	0.99
16	I will prevent any of my children from taking up employment in communities that are frequently attacked by insurgents	3 . 1	0.90
17	When Nigerian youths cannot frequently attend schools of their interest or serve in some parts of the country due to insurgency, the unity of the country will be at stake	3 . 1	1.04
18	Nigeria could likely drift into another civil war or split if insurgency is not urgently addressed	3 . 1	0.97

Source: Survey, 2017; N0=200; Grand mean 3.I

Table 5 shows that insurgency could impact negatively on the unity and integration of Nigeria. The grand mean of 3.I was greater than the acceptable mean of 2.5.

Summary of findings of the study

The perception of parents were that:

1. Insurgency impacts school enrollment, attrition and retention negatively. That communities that are frequently attacked by insurgents would experience reduction in pupils' enrollment and retention as well as experience increase in rates of attrition.
2. They are unwilling to enroll their children in schools, colleges and universities that are frequently attacked by insurgents.
3. They are willing to withdraw rather than retain their children in schools and colleges that are frequently attacked by insurgents.

4. They would reject posting of their children to communities that are frequently attacked by insurgents for National Youths Service Corps assignment.
5. Insurgency is capable of disintegrating the country.

Discussion of findings

The findings of this study showed that parents perceived insurgency to have high negative impact on school enrollment, attrition and retention. The respondents accepted that insurgency had led to the death of many parents of school going children, even death of some schooling children as well as that some parents that survived are displaced, lost their means of livelihood and that many children lost contact with their parents. The Grand mean of 3.1 for the ten items listed on the instrument (Table 1), was greater than the acceptable mean of 2.5. The result of this study agrees with the "Education Fact Sheet" presented about Nigeria by the United States Embassy in Nigeria (2012). According to this "Fact Sheet", Nigeria has a large number of out-of-school children and that non-school attendance was highest among states in the northeast and northwest zones. Speaking in a similar tone, the study of Umar and Terhemba (2014) found the level of primary school attendance to be low under the crises situation in Damaturu metropolis, Yobe state. This is not surprising because security is a pillar for every meaningful development including education.

Again, one of the findings of this study reported that parents were not willing to enroll their children in schools within the communities where activities of insurgents are frequent and to as well withdraw them from schooling in such communities and also to discourage their friends from patronizing such schools. This result is in conformity with that of Enrollment Catalyst (2012) that when parents are satisfied with a school it will lead to strong retention and increased enrollment. A similar view was that of Mudege and Zulu (2008) that insecure neighborhood could have negative impact on schooling. And according to Umar and Terhemba (2014), peace and tranquility is an antidote for successful teaching and learning in any educational system. Where this is lacking, input and output would decline markedly.

National unity and integration of Nigeria is greatly threatened as this study again pointed out. Respondents are not willing to allow their children to go to school, accept NYSC posting and even take up employment in communities that experience frequent attacks of insurgents. When these restrictions are put in place, then many states of the country particularly, the states in the North may not have children from the eastern and western zones coming to school in their areas. This could have the capacity to cause disunity in the country and water down one of the roles of education as an instrument for national unity.

In a typical school community in Nigeria, students of diverse languages, cultures and backgrounds conglomerate to learn, respect, appreciate and are taught to harness their diversities to social, economic and educational advantages. In fact, this is one of the reasons for establishing over one hundred unity schools across communities in Nigeria (Agbese, 2009). When these schools do not receive students again from some states because of their locations in war zones, the purpose for establishing them will be defeated and the consequences on the nation would be great.

In fact, respondents opinion was that insurgency in the nation was drifting Nigeria into another civil war and or heading it for a split ($X = 3.1 > 2.5$). This finding was not far from the view of Gumi cited by Okoye (2016) that Nigeria is catalytically deteriorating. Insurgency undoubtedly spells danger for national unity (Okoye, 2016) as well as integration and the earlier this is confronted frontally, the better for a one united and prosperous Nigeria.

Conclusion

It was shown in this study that parents perceived insurgency to have negative impact on the nation's education as well as the nation's unity. The implication of this is that parents will no longer be willing to send or retain their children in schools or for other assignments such as NYSC in communities incessantly attacked by insurgents. And when this happens, national unity and integration would likely become elusive and national economic growth and development would be impeded. The need to live freely in any part of the country for purposes such as schooling or employment irrespective of the diversities is crucial and should be non-negotiable for proper integration and healthy growth. If insurgency constrains this integration, then national unity will be threatened and Nigeria is likely to experience another civil war with more calamitous consequences.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were put forward:

1. **Good governance:** It is most widely speculated that insurgencies and other forms of agitations, organized or not, are expressions of dissatisfaction with government in power. What is obvious and synonymous with governance in Nigeria is corruption and display of ill-gotten wealth with impunity and arrogance at the full glare of the majority of the citizenry that wallow in abject poverty and penury. Until, there is a revision of this trend, and the welfare of the masses becomes the concern of the leaders at the helm of affairs of this nation, peace and harmonious co-existence will still remain a mirage as no military threat or opposition could be a permanent solution. Power lies more in the will of the masses than in the barrel of the guns.
2. **Teaching of religious, moral and political education:** The Federal Ministry of Education should re-emphasize these in the national curriculum of education in Nigeria. What she wanted to do recently to trade religious education for Arabic studies would have been catastrophic on the nation that majority of her citizens act godlessly. Many people because of false or wrong religious knowledge have thrown, are throwing and will continue to throw Nigeria into crises if not checked. The best way to tackle this is through sound religious, moral and political education to be delivered formally in schools as teaching and learning subjects and through regular seminars and conferences as well as the use of National Orientation Agencies (NOA), churches and mosques.

3. **Improved security and national surveillance:** The military and paramilitary bodies need frequent training to update on how best to keep the nation together. Procurement of modern security detectors and sophisticated war machines that will stand the military at vantage position over the dissidents should be giving more priority in the security budget of the nation.
4. **Forming a common opposition to fight a common enemy:** Nigerians should see the need to come together as one to fight a common enemy irrespective of religion, ethnicity or political affiliations. "The fox should first be chased into the bush after that the chicken should be warned not to wonder far into the bush." Boko Haram is persisting today because fighting it at the onset was mistaken for religion. Those clamoring for the sovereign state of Biafra are being shielded ethnically. Until these differences are buried, the enemy of this nation will continue to be shielded. Agitations should be made more civil than military for the sake of the upcoming generation. If this current generation inherited a united Nigeria, the onus is on it to hand over to the next generation a united Nigeria.

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