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Insurgency and Socioeconomic Development: A Sociological Examination of the Impact of Boko Haram Insurgency on Commercial Activities in the Yobe State, Nigeria

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KEYWORDS

Boko Haram, Insecurity, Commercial Activities, Structural anomie theory, Socioeconomic, Yobe State

ABSTRACT

The study is designed to examine the impact of Boko Haram insurgency on commercial activities in the Damaturu Local Government Area of the Yobe State, Nigeria. Mixed research method using both quantitative (structured questionnaire) and qualitative (in-depth interview) research techniques was used. 385 respondents were sampled using the Creative Research System formula for sample size calculation. The quantitative data obtained were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics while Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was employed for analysis of the qualitative data. The study revealed that the Boko Haram crisis has seriously affected the socioeconomic development and commercial activities of the study area the destructions of markets, killings and abductions of business owners. Finally, the study suggested that the Government of the Yobe State should initiate a good pro-poor social investment programs for small and medium business operators, the government should reopen all closed markets for the purpose of commercial activities in the communities where relative peace has been restored and finally the government should provide more security to enable the populace restart their commercial activities and suitable environment for business operations.

Introduction

The Boko Haram insurgency is widely believed to have begun in the north-eastern region of Nigeria, specifically in Maiduguri, the capital of the Borno state, sometime around 1995. It then reportedly underwent a series of strategic shifts between 2002 and 2005 before going into the whole operation in 2009. The region's businesses and commercial activities were operating at total capacity. Farming was on a commercial scale, and all of the components necessary for a decent standard of living (including good health care, quality education, affordable housing, nutritious food, protective services for one's family and possessions, and a sense of community) were available in sufficient quantities. However, since 2011, when the insurgents first launched their massive attacks, life in the region has been rendered meaningless and intolerable.

The State's inability to empathize with the hardship of its citizens is somehow also responsible for the rise of Boko Haram and the security problems in nation. The northern region of Nigeria has the highest poverty rate in the country. Other factors responsible for the emergence of the sect group include religious extremism, unemployment, poverty, corruption among others. Poverty, religious conflict, economic sabotage, unemployment, violence, and crime may all be traced back to these factors, which have had a profound impact on the stability of the country (Ilufoye 2011 as cited in Oladayo 2019).

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Yobe state's insurgents have fostered criminality and terrorist activities throughout the state, with terrible results for a state that previously took pride in its tagged as "the young shall grow" (Sallau 2020). Yobe has been in the news since July 2011 due to the continued unleashing of violence by Boko Haram. The state has suffered dramatically due to the insurgency activities, which have resulted in many deaths, loss of livelihood, destruction of markets, business premises, public schools, and recreational centres. In addition, taking over of business premises such as factories, shops and stores by security operatives as cells and armouries have further impacted the state's economy and commercial activities. The petty traders, such as the nail cutters, water vendors, and Akara sellers, were affected by the activities mentioned above by the securities and the sect. According to the World Bank Northeast Nigeria Recovery Report (WBNNRR 2019), "*the inflation rate in Yobe on all items rose from 6.6% in 2015 to 14.7% in 2019, while inflation on food items rose from 7% in 2015 to 15.2% in 2019. The state's internally generated revenue dropped from 201 million naira in 2011 to 188 million naira in 2018 (NBS, 2019) due to the decline in commercial activities*".

However, the security situation has improved over the last three to four years with no single bomb blast in the state capital since 2018. Many displaced people have returned to their homes as security forces liberated most of the local governments that were under the control of the group. These events can be interpreted as the absence of sporadic shootings, the kidnapping of business owners, and explosions in city centers. In their efforts to resuscitate and reactivate the economy and commercial operations in the impacted area, the federal and state governments have reopened most of the closed markets and withdrawn the army from the streets, allowing most people to re-access their stores and businesses. According to Abubakar (2021), the Yobe State government has directed the state's ministry of commerce and industry to reopen the state's six major markets, which have been closed for nearly five years. In addition, the state government built three new markets and implemented several social investment projects to aid the impacted areas (Abubakar 2021). Furthermore, the federal government implemented N-power and conditional cash transfer programs to alleviate the state's high poverty rate.

Objective of the Study

The study aims to assess sociologically the impact of Boko Haram insurgency on the commercial activities in Yobe state, Nigeria.

Methodology

The research employed the mixed methods approach whereby data was gathered using both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. It is a technique whereby researchers switch between qualitative and quantitative research paradigms throughout a study to get a deeper understanding of the problem they are investigating (Creswell 2005). The Primary data was obtained from contact with the respondents through the administration of questionnaire and interview, while the secondary data was obtained from relevant literatures/documents. The study employed both descriptive and inferential statistics for the analysis of the quantitative data while Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) for the analysis of the qualitative data.

The sample size for the study was 385 determined by determined by using the Creative Research System formula for sample size calculation. Multi stage sampling technique was used in clustering Yobe state into four clusters. Purposive sampling was used in selecting two LGAs from each cluster. Thus, a stratified sampling technique was applied to stratify the respondents into different categories such as; Community leaders, Business owners, government and non-governmental workers.

Literature Review

Boko Haram Insurgency in Yobe State

The insurgency have impacted the commercial activities in all the state's seventeen local government

areas, either directly or indirectly. However, the most affected communities are Gujba, Damaturu, Tarmuwa, and Potikum local governments, whereas Nguru, Gashua, Machina, and Bursary local governments are the least affected or indirectly affected (Qaiyum & Alkali 2022). Thousands of population were forced to leave their homes in these communities as a result of the activities of Boko Haram. As the security situation improved, most of the displaced people returned to their homes (Qaiyum & Allkali 2022).

Educationally, the state was seriously affected, on January 6, 2021, Boko Haram infiltrated the town of Geidam, Yobe state, and attempted to kidnap students from Mai Idris Alooma Polytechnic, but the attack was repulsed. They succeed in kidnapping the District Head, injuring numerous citizens, and stealing food and medical supplies. According to the former governor of Borno state, "Boko Haram is responsible for the destruction of over 900 schools in the state since 2011, as well as the killings of 176 teachers" (Salkida 2014). Boko Haram discouraged hundreds of children in Borno and Yobe states from pursuing their education by destroying schools, driving away community members, and targeting female students in widespread abductions and other attacks, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA 2018). OCHA estimated in 2017 that three million children in northeastern Nigeria required immediate school access. In Borno state alone, about 85 secondary schools were closed due to the persistent attacks on schools by Boko Haram in March 2014, while several schools were also closed in Adamawa and Yobe states. By late September 2017, 57% of Borno state's schools were still shuttered, as reported by the United Nations. In addition, hundreds of students, teachers, and other members of the Yobe state education system were killed or kidnapped after the sect assaulted, bombed, or destroyed several schools and other institutions in the state. Yobe State had experienced closure of schools especially in Buni Yadi, Buni Gari, Katarko, Dapchi, Gulani, potiskum, Goniri and above all the state capital Damaturu.

Boko Haram militants have also attacked facilities that provide medical care in the state of Yobe. The healthcare system has been significantly impacted due to these occurrences. As a result, those not native to Yobe have left for other states to work in the medical field (Ager *et al*., 2015, as cited in Onuah 2019). In addition, direct assaults have been carried out on several medical facilities, resulting in the militant looting of medications, medical supplies, ambulances, and other vehicles (Ager et.al, 2015, as cited in Onuah 2019). Similarly, the health system in the state was also affected as several health workers were abducted and killed during raids by the Boko Haram insurgents (Ager *et al*. 2015).

Nevertheless, the Yobe State government's determination to improve health provision by lifting a prohibition on recruitment and introducing incentives to health workers has aided in reviving the state's healthcare systems (Ager 2015). It would appear that instituting policies of free drug provision and decentralised drug supply has benefited the health system's functioning (Mohammed 2017). Local services and group cohesiveness have been significant assets in the fight against the effects of the insurgency on service utilisation and quality. The commitment and motivation of staff, especially among staff members who are indigenous to the state, have protected the quality of healthcare services and empowered flexibility in deploying human resources (Ager *et al*. 2015).

Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe are the states that have been hit most by the crisis (UNHCR 2018). Since September 2018, estimates provided by the UNHCR indicate that 1.8 million people have been displaced within their own countries, and an additional 5.8 million people require assistance. Borno state alone account for about 80% of the IDPs and more than half of the number are living in host communities which put pressure on the resources already being strained to their limits (UNHCR 2018, as cited in Kamta *et al*. 2019).

Thus, the state's huge number of internally displaced persons increases insecurity, tensions, and vulnerabilities among the residents in affected localities. This issue arose due to displaced farmers in

Zones A and B being unable to return to farming during the planting seasons. In addition, zone C has become the area indirectly influenced by large inbound migration to various local governments, such as Nguru, Gashua, and Jakusko (Qaiyum & Alkali 2022).

Indeed, the devastating effect of Boko Haram insurgency attacks has occurred in all the geopolitical regions. For example, many people have been murdered, homes destroyed, and markets and schools have been forced to close. Additionally, it has been a catastrophic event that has caused a quick decline in farming and fishing, famine, and a fear of travel.

Impact of Boko Haram Insurgency on the Commercial Sector

The insurgency by Boko Haram has had devastating humanitarian ramifications, but it has also had broader economic repercussions, particularly in the northeast from which it sprang. According to the World Investment Report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD 2021), the "foreign direct investment in the Nigerian economy fell to $77.97 million in Q2 2021, a decrease of 49.6 percent and 47.5 percent from the $154.76 million and $148.59 million recorded in the previous quarter and Q2 2020, respectively, owing to the activities of the Boko Haram sect". Additionally, the domestic airline sector in Nigeria, which generates around N3 billion annually, has been severely impacted by cancellations and delays in the North, leading to loss of about half of their profits (Ezeoba 2011). It is impossible to put a price on the insurgency's human, societal, and economic tolls. As a result of the sect's unprecedented attacks, business in the region's northeast has slowed significantly. Fear of Boko Haram's coordinated strikes has prevented banks, marketplaces, and shops from opening consistently (Adagba 2019). As noted, attacks on banks, marketplaces, parks, and government departments are hindering economic development in the northeast, causing human capital loss and investment loss (Adagba 2019).

Therefore, citizens of Chad, Cameroun, and Niger, who the Nigerian government claims are Boko Haram members, are being sent back to their own countries. Evidence suggests that not all citizens returning from the nations mentioned earlier are active members of Boko Haram. The economic activity in cities like Maiduguri, Damaturu, and Yola will undoubtedly suffer as a result of the exodus of its businesspeople (Alkali & Yaya 2019). According to Ovaga (2012, as cited in Mohammed 2014), in such a scenario, sending back foreign nationals who make significant contributions to the development of the northeast through their economic activities would have a devastating effect on the region's economy.

Similarly, most commercial banks in areas devastated by Boko Haram have decreased their operating hours from eight to three (Mohammed 2014). "In Maiduguri, Borno state, where the sect originated, the frequent bombings and clashes between Boko Haram and the security agents have weighed down seriously on the commercial and businesses activities in the city as many business have reportedly crumbled while many people have fled the state" (Shiklam 2012 as cited in Awojobi 2019). Based on the poverty profile published by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBC 2019), it is clear that poverty is more widespread in the north than in other parts of the country. In addition, looking at the existing socioeconomic environment in Nigeria's North East indicates glaring shortages. Only 35% of the population is employed, and fewer than 24% of the population has ever enrolled in elementary school. About 100,000 children die each year from diarrhoea-related causes. Disappointment, frustration, a feeling of deprivation, and, eventually, anger have been fostered by the North-East Nigerian region's economic and social inequalities, lack of educational opportunities and other basic facilities, joblessness, and expanding poverty (Bamidele 2016).

People are the essential factor in any nation's progress and prosperity. The state has an inherent obligation and responsibility to provide for the needs of its citizens. Social and economic tensions emerge when people do not have access to adequate housing, nutritious food, and appropriate clothing

(Bamidele 2016). Yobe State's social, economic, and political fabric has taken a severe hit due to Boko Haram's terrorist attacks. Businesses around the state have felt the effects of the insurgency. The military has established a camp there, and some stores have been taken over by the soldiers, forcing the proprietors to either move or abandon the area.

Similarly, Mohammed (2012, as cited in Nwanegbo & Odigbo 2014), discovered that 97% of firms were negatively affected by the security issue. As a result, many businesses were forced to reduce their hours of operation, lay off employees, or both. For instance, commercial banks have been compelled to change their opening hours from the customary 6am-11pm to 9am-4pm. Customers of banks, especially merchants, are finding it increasingly difficult to deposit daily profits in banks under the new operating structure because of the institutions' reduced hours of operation. Alternatively, these hapless shopkeepers have little choice but to bury their cash. In addition to the regular suicide bombs, there has been an increase in shop breaking and burglaries in the targeted regions. Many people, particularly merchants, are fleeing the escalating insecurity in the north for better safety and economic conditions in the south. Furthermore, commodity transit from the north to the south, where they are mostly consumed, has decreased substantially, driving up food prices. (Dauda 2014).

Theoretical Framework

This work's theoretical justifications were derived from the theories of structural anomie, to explain and justify the causes and impact of the Boko Haram insurgency. According to the anomie theory, when social laws are lax or broken, society's ability to control how individuals behave and make them respect the rule is also lax or ineffective (Iwariemie-Jaja 2003). The theory aims to prove a relationship between a structural bottleneck, anomie, and criminal inclination. According to Durkheim (1897), anomie is a morally unregulated condition, which is a breakdown in either society's standards or amoral norms (Iwarimie-Jaja 2003). People, therefore, find it challenging to adapt to the changing circumstances of life when there are no clear rules to guide members of society.

Merton (1938) builds on Durkheim's anomie idea further. Although Merton's (1938, as referenced in Omotor 2009) anomie theory did not specifically address criminality, it stressed that disparity may occur because of the way society is set up, which could lead to anarchy. Merton begins by stating that while society defines success in terms of certain objectives (such as financial security), it does not necessarily offer the means (such as education and fulfilling employment opportunities) to fulfill these cultural expectations. Two structurally inherent factors that are essential for the sociological explanation of the relativity of deviant conduct are described by Merton as follows: (1) Culturally prescribed goals, which are accepted as legitimate and highly desirable by all, regardless of position or class; (2) the means view approriate by the society in achieving them (Bell 2021).

Therefore, whether or not people embrace society's goals and have the chance to achieve them determines patterns of rule-breaking. To this degree, there will undoubtedly be five adaptations (Iwarimie-Jaja 2003). These are conformity, innovation, retreatism, ritualism, and rebellion adaption modes. Since those who fall into the conformity group accept both the culturally prescribed goals and the structurally sanctioned ways of accomplishing the goals, conformity is the initial mode of adaptation and is not aberrant. The other four are all crimes or acts of deviation. Innovation refers to persons who accept goals but reject means, retreatism to those who accept goals but reject means, ritualism to those who accept goals but reject means, and rebellion to those who attempt to alter the entire system.

The idea significantly aided in the explanation of why criminal activity becomes inevitable in social structures that create values that certain people turn to violence, such as the insurgency in Nigeria. Additionally, based on Merton's model of adaptation, the insurgency is categorized as a rebellion because the Boko Haram group wants to replace the current system of Western democracy with one

governed entirely by their interpretation of Islamic law.

However, an Italian Marxist intellectual and politician developed the notion of hegemony in his book *The Prison Writings* to explain the ideological conflict. According to Gramsci, hegemony refers to a group's "cultural, moral, and ideological" leadership over allies and inferior groups. As mentioned by Jones (2006), Gramsci believed that for the working class to replace the ruling class, it would need to mobilize the majority of its like-minded citizens (Anyanwu 2016). One may claim that since 2002, Boko Haram has resisted various state military deployments and instead mobilized more sympathizers outside of Nigeria, which has resulted in territorial unrest and wars.

Hoffman (1995:5-6) contends that "the very need to exercise a monopoly of lawful force arises only when nations are challenged by rebels or lawbreakers who themselves employ force and who (either implicitly or openly) attack the legitimacy of the laws they break Moreover, the difference argument contends that what is lawful for the states is unlawful for the insurgents, and the opposite is true".

The theories assisted in comprehending the causes for the emergence of several insurgency groups by Nigerian youth, including Boko Haram. However, as the theory demonstrated, the socioeconomic circumstances of these youths are substantially a factor in their involvement. As noted by Alkali and Yaya (2019), one cannot completely rule out concerns like the misunderstood interpretation of the real teaching of Islam in the involvement of the youths in the group. Despite some of them having degrees and others working hard, many young people in Nigeria are left unemployed and uncared for because they cannot find environments that would help them realize their potential. It is even more upsetting to learn that many Boko Haram members have been subject to societal maltreatment since they were young. This is reflected in the Almajiranci institution (some parents' traditional method of sending their children to study Qur'anic lessons from a teacher who lives far away from the children's town), which is widespread among the northern Muslims.

However, the theory has been criticized for some flaws. One of these criticisms is that it implies everyone has the same ideals and aims, which may not always be the case. People aim for a variety of things, including academic, athletic, and social achievement, as noted by Siegel (2010). Most young people could be more focused on short-term "immediate" objectives like maintaining a busy social life or excelling in sports than on long-term "ideal" accomplishments like financial success. Athleticism, IQ, personality, and family life are just a few examples of the non-social class-based variables that can help or hinder goal achievement.

Findings of the Study

Findings of the study are discussed in this section as it relates to the impact of the Boko Haram insurgency on the commercial activities in Yobe State, Nigeria. 385 questionnaires were distributed and 358 was retrieved, giving a total of 92% retrieval rate. Therefore, the analysis of the outcome will be based on the retrieved questionnaires.

Analysis of the Respondents' View on How the Boko Haram insurgency affects the Economic and Commercial Activities of Yobe state

Table 1 show that, majority of the respondents specifically 57.8% and 29.6 % responded strongly agreed and agreed that insurgency resulted in the downfall of some business merchants in Yobe state whereas very negligible percentages (8.1% and 4.5%) disagree and strongly disagreed correspondingly that insurgency resulted in the downfall of some business merchants.

Table 2 show that 21.2% and 22.9 % of the respondents respectively viewed destruction of shops and burning of markets as the effect of Boko Haram on economic activities in Yobe state, 9.8% – fear of

attacks by local business owners, 11.7% – frequent threats by the insurgents while 27.9% of the respondents opined all the mentioned variables are having collective effect on the economic activities in Yobe state. This revelation can be supported by the statement made by one of the business owner's association leaders.

Activities of Boko Haram sect has cripple our economy, marketers and investors from outside of Yobe state were scared of been kidnapped or killed by the insurgents. As a result, commercial activities were no longer go as expected and usual. In fact, people are no longer coming to sell their goods, nor did they come and buy from our merchants. We are pleading with the government to provide more securities to enable us restart our commercial activities (IDI, 2021).

A community leader stated that:

> *The traders went through serious difficulties during the closure of the markets and many small business owners have lost their capital. But the security situation had improved and we are called on the marketers to continue cooperating with the securities. We are pleading with the governor to rebuild their shops that were burnt down and assist them with capital.* (IDI with a community leader in Geidam LGA 2021).

A merchant stated that:

> *Most of us are victims and our businesses has been affected. I have been in this market since I was younger, but I have never experienced such calamity befalling our business than the carnage of Boko Haram...The flow of visitors that come to buy goods here, on weekly basis from within and outside Yobe State (from Adamawa, Borno, Gombe, etc.), has drastically reduced. However, due to the improvement in security, most of our markets are reopened for commercial activities and the flow of visitors has improved.* (IDI with a merchant in Gulani 2021).

Due to the recurrence of attacks, the government was forced to close Gujba and Geidam markets. The two markets are well-known for being northern Nigeria's largest and most historically significant markets. Several people were killed during the raids, and many more were kidnapped. Furthermore, people from other parts of the country are hesitant to visit the state to conduct their daily economic activities. The locals believe that the state and federal governments need to increase the number of troops deployed in these areas. Finally, most citizens believe that the government should follow the approach of the neighbouring state (Borno state), which involves arming vigilante groups with sophisticated weaponry and organising civilian joint task forces to improve the state's security situation.

Discussion of Major Findings.

The findings found that the majority of Boko Haram actions in Yobe state involved the destruction of businesses and the burning of markets, which impacted the commercial and economic activities of Yobe state residents. It was also determined that the terrorists' actions harmed Yobe State's economy, as many visiting merchants and investors feared being kidnapped or assassinated by the insurgents. As a result, commercial activities were no longer go as expected and usual. These findings coincided with research carryout by Mohammed (2014) on "*The Effect of Boko Haram Crisis on Socioeconomic Activities in Yobe State*", which revealed that the actions of Boko Haram had caused widespread panic in Nigeria, especially in Yobe state. Social, economic, and political life in Yobe State has been profoundly altered due to Boko Haram's terrorist attacks. Businesses around the state have felt the effects of the insurgency. Nighttime shops, such as those selling tea or serving fast food, have closed down due to the current security climate. Contrarily, according to Qaiyum and Alkali (2022), the state's security situation has improved, and commercial activities are picking up. Therefore, small and medium business operators such as tea vendors, noodle vendors, fishermen, and Okada (commercial motorcyclists) who operate at night have almost resumed operations (Qaiyum & Alkali 2022).

The research further reveals that Boko Haram insurgency has affected the income earning of people

in Yobe state which led to decline in the flow of visitors that come to buy goods on weekly basis from within and outside of Yobe State (from Adamawa, Borno, Gombe, etc.), and resulted in the downfall of some business merchants in the state. this revealtaion can be supported with a study conducted by Okereocha (2012 as cited in Olasadun 2019), which discovered that "as non-indigenes moved out of the north, their economic contributions are withdrawn with attendant economic downturn. As this drain is crippling the economy in the north, it has reverberating effects in the Nigerian macroeconomics. This is because, apart from the churches, the sect also attack commercial places like markets, parks, government agencies and banks". According to Olasadun (2019), many traders fled the city leaving roughly half of the 10,000 stalls and shops in Maiduguri's market vacant. Furthermore, the Boko Haram insurgency has caused at least 35% of the approximately three million traders of Igbo descent and numerous other tribes operating in small- and medium-scale businesses to relocate their operations to other regions (Olasadun 2019).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this research, the study concludes that there is a strong relationship between the Boko Haram insurgency, dwindled commercial activities and down fall of business moguls in the Yobe state, Nigeria. Furthermore, the study conclude that relative peace has been restored in the state and its environs cum several commercial activities that were crippled due the insurgency have been resuscitated. Finally, the problem of insurgency has affected negatively the socio-economic and commercial development of Yobe State in general and Damaturu in particular which crippled almost all business activities in the Town.

Recommendations

Based on the discovery of the study, the following recommendations were made.

Government of Yobe State should initiate a good pro-poor social investment programs for small and medium business operators.

It is recommended that government should reopen all closed markets for the purpose of commercial activities in the communities where relative peace has been restored.

The government should provide more securities to enable the populace restart their commercial activities and suitable environment for business operations.

It is also recommended that federal and Yobe State Government should ensure that markets and shops that were destroyed during the insurgency in the state are rebuild and survivors of the deceased victims and commercial actors should be encouraged and compensated monetarily.

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Tables

Table 1: Respondents' Views on whether Boko Haram Insurgency Has Resulted in the Downfall of some Merchants in Yobe state

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	207	57.8
Agree	106	29.6
Disagree	29	8.1
Strongly Disagree	16	4.5
Total	358	100

Source: Personal Field Survey Data, 2021

Table 2: Respondents' Views on How Boko Haram Affect the economic Activities in Yobe state

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Destruction of Shops	76	21.2
Burning of Markets	82	22.9
Fear of Attacks By Local Business Owners	35	9.8
Fear of Investing by Foreign Marketers	16	4.5
Assassinations of Business Tycoons	4	1.1
Frequent Threats by the Insurgents	42	11.7
Kidnapping of Businessmen	3	0.8
All of the Above	100	27.9
Total	358	100

Source: Personal Field Survey Data, 2021