

Effects of Insecurity on Primary School Attendance in Damaturu Metropolis Yobe State, Nigeria

Umaru Abdullahi

*Guidance and Counselling Unit
Yobe State University, Damaturu
E-mail: abduallahumar310@gmail.com*

Terhemba, G. A.

*Department of Education,
University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri, Nigeria
E-mail: atsua4real@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of insecurity on primary school attendance in Damaturu, Yobe State, Nigeria. The study is a survey. Three questions were addressed: what is the level of school attendance under the crisis situation in Damaturu metropolis? Are parents and teachers willing to send back their children to the affected schools? Does insecurity have significant effects on attendance of school children? Effect of Insecurity on School Attendance Questionnaire (EISAQ) was developed for the study. The alpha reliability of the questionnaire was .965. A multistage sampling technique was used to select 225 parents and teachers in 10 Primary Schools in Damaturu, Yobe State that were affected in the activities of Boko Haram in the metropolis were administered with copies of the questionnaire. The responses to the questionnaire were summarized using percentages. T-test was computed to test for differences in responses on the effect of insecurity on school attendance. The level of primary school attendance under the crisis situation in Damaturu metropolis was found to be low but that of male pupils were found to be lower than that of female pupils. Parents and teachers were willing to send their children back to the affected primary schools. Male and female significantly differ on the effects of insecurity on primary school attendance. It is incumbent on the government to provide adequate and effective security personnel to all the institutions of learning in Damaturu Metropolis, Yobe State, Nigeria to stop the burning of schools and constant shooting around educational institutions.

Keywords: *Insecurity, Primary School, counselling*

INTRODUCTION

In any education system, peace and tranquility is an antidote for a successful teaching and learning. In recent times, however, millions of school children in Nigeria are caught up in conflicts that result to insecurity not only of their school attendance but to their lives and property. Regular school attendance is crucial to education and development of school children in any country. There is always negative impact on the educational development of the child, the school and the community when children do not attend school regularly. Because of this, there are laws in many countries that require a child to attend school until eighteen years of age. A child who attends school regularly is likely to learn more and become more successful in school than those who do not. Parents who make regular

school attendance a priority also are helping their children to learn. In addition, regular school attendance is an important ingredient for academic success and a successful life. School attendance habit is formed early in life. A child who develops good attendance habit in the early years of education is more likely to continue throughout the school career. In addition, a child who misses school has missed a carefully planned sequences of instruction. Patrick (2012) observes that such a child misses active learning experiences and class participation, the opportunity to ask questions and is more likely to fall behind and drop out of the school. It is in the light of this that Fafunwa (1983) notes in the early 1980s that dropout was one of the most serious problems that have continued to bedevil the Nigerian educational system from the colonial administration up to independence in 1960 and even beyond. Different organizations and governments have advanced a variety of definitions of human security. The United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) defines human security as freedom from fear and wants (Okorie, 2011). Japanese foreign policy's view on human security may include all the menaces that threaten human survival, daily life and dignity – for example, environmental degradation, violations of human rights, transnational organized crime in illicit drugs, refugees, poverty, anti-personnel land mines and other infectious diseases such as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

There are no agreed definitions of what precisely insecurity is, but there is a general agreement that insecurity is linked to chronic threats of disease, hunger, terrorism and poverty. Therefore, insecurity and poverty cannot be divorced from each other. Severe levels of poverty may expose people to all kinds of security threats. Poor people in developing countries frequently face relatively high risks from such things as domestic violence, crime, sickness and unemployment (McCawley, 2004). Nigeria in our current democratic dispensation is faced with different kinds of threats such as armed robbery, kidnapping, political thugs, ethno-religious conflicts, organized violent groups, economic-based violence, gender-based violence, sexual abuse, trafficking and recently the menace of Boko Haram (Ibrahim, 2002).

In recent times, Yobe State and Damaturu Metropolis in particular and some parts of northern Nigeria have been experiencing security threats because of the activities of Boko Haram, which means 'western education is sin'. The activities of this group alone have forced many children of formal education to abandon school in an already ill-educated and disadvantaged region. Eric (2012) reports that it is not just the pupils or students at the targeted schools that end up being affected, teachers and others are also affected. As a result of insecurity, school enrolment in the region has gone down by 28 percent more than any other region in the country (Bwala, 2012). According to the Nigerian Education Data Survey (NEDS, 2010) as cited in Saleh (2011) constant attacks makes it even harder for teachers and other stakeholders to persuade parents to allow their children stay on at school. The issue of insecurity in northern Nigeria has compelled school children to drop out of the school. Fafunwa (1983) notes that dropout is one of the most serious problems that have continued to bedevil the Nigerian educational system from the colonial administration up to independence in 1960 and even beyond. This view is supported by Patrick (2012) who

observes that in the west coast of Africa, a considerable proportion of student dropout of schools each year. The effects of insecurity on school attendance in northern Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Survey by both the print and electronic media indicates that over 85% of the school children in Borno State do not attend school due to insecurity in the State (Bwala, 2012). Criminal activities perpetuated in Nigeria are always attributed to youths who dropped out of school. Sadly, the dropouts of schools in Damaturu metropolis of Yobe State are on the increase daily because of insecurity in the State. Scenario tends to suggest that the future of the Nigerian child especially in the north and Damaturu in particular who drop out of school is in serious danger and thus, need a very serious attention.

Apart from negative impact of insecurity on school attendance leading to school dropout as well as economic and social problems it has caused the nation, Okorie (2011) observes that Nigerians are constantly bedeviled with fears of one attack by one extremist group or the other. Hostage taking, bomb throwing (explosion) and violent crimes are now part of the daily life of Nigerians (Fasan, 2011). It is in light of the above that Okpaga, Chijioke and Innocent (2012) observe that Nigeria as a nation must make concerted efforts to raise the educational attainment of all its youths who are the leaders of tomorrow especially those that are deprived of regular school attendance because of insecurity and conflicts. The hope for the country seems to be grim if children cannot go to school.

There has been a lot of worry over the present insecurity in the country and Damaturu metropolis of Yobe State, Nigeria in particular. No one can deny the fact that economic activities, movement of people, goods and services have been seriously hampered by the activities of terrorist from 2009 to date. The worst of it all is that pupils of school age in their millions are out of school in the State due to insecurity situation. This is due to frequent bombing, killing of young and old, male and female including school pupils, burning of worship places, schools, and sound of gunshots. The effects of insecurity in the State seem to be enormous not only on parents, the school and the society but especially on the school pupils. Survey by the print and electronic media on insecurity in the State has showed insignificant empirical evidence. Based on this knowledge gap therefore, the study raised the following questions:

1. What is the level of school attendance under the crisis situation in Damaturu metropolis?
2. Do Parents and teachers significantly differ on impact of insecurity on attendance of school pupils? This question was amenable to hypothesis testing.

H₀: Parents and teachers do not significantly differ on impact of insecurity on school attendance of primary school pupils in Damaturu metropolis.

METHOD

This is an exploratory study that adopted a survey design therefore; it was not rigorous with sampling. The population of the study consisted of all the primary schools that were burnt down during the Boko Haram crises in Damaturu metropolis, Yobe State, Nigeria. A multi stage sampling technique was used to collect data from 225 parents and

teachers; 105 teachers (45 males and 60 females) and 120 parents (50 males and 75 females). This allowed parents and teachers who were willing to answer the questionnaire at the time of visit to participate in the study. The instrument used for data collection was a self developed questionnaire with 20 items entitled *Effects of Insecurity on School Attendance Questionnaire (EISAQ)*. The questionnaire was developed based on the principle of content relevance (Anastasi and Urbina, 2008). Consequently items for the questionnaire were derived from suggestions offered by experts on insecurity. Some of the items were derived from sources mentioned above while others from the internet. The questionnaire has Cronbach alpha of .965. It was computed using the formula given by Allen and Yen (1979).

The *EISAQ* was administered to the teachers in their schools while parents were at the point of collecting their wards during closing hours in the schools that were in session. Other parents who were known to have wards in the schools that were closed down were visited in their offices and others at home. It took an average of six weeks to administer the questionnaire to all the respondents. Additional information on pupils' attendance was also collected from the school attendance register. For the purpose of estimating the alpha reliability of the questionnaire the categories of responses were weighted – willing = 3, not willing = 2 and undecided = 1. To answer the questions raised in the study, the percentage of response to each of the response category was computed per item in the questionnaire. The percentage was rounded up to the nearest whole number for brevity. To determine if parents and teachers significantly differ on impact of insecurity on school attendance, t-test was computed and tested at the $P < 0.05$ level of significance using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 for all computations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The level of school attendance from the registers in schools under the crisis situation in Damaturu metropolis is presented on table 1. The result reveals that the highest school attendance of pupils in all the schools was 29.26% in Damaturu International School. That of male was 49.33% while that of female was 50.66%. Sani Daura Primary School recorded attendance as low as 5.57%, male 69.56% and 30.43% female respectively. Model Primary School and Nayi-Nawa Primary School recorded zero attendance of pupils after the attack. The general attendance of female pupils seems to be low as compared to that of male pupils. This implies that the state of insecurity has significant effect on the schools resulting to low attendance of students in all the schools in Damaturu metropolis. This finding aligned more with that of Bwala, (2012) and Eric (2012) who report that as a result of insecurity in Maiduguri Metropolis, school enrolment has gone down by 28 percent more than any other State in the country. With this development, it is not just the pupils that ended up being affected; teachers, parents and the entire State are also affected. This confirmed Sale (2011) finding that constant attacks makes it even harder for teachers and other stakeholders to persuade parents to let their children stay on at school. Parents and

teacher's responses on willingness to send back their children to the affected schools in Damaturu metropolis is presented on table 2. Results reveal that about 54.5% to 92.3% of parents and teachers were willing to send their children back to the affected schools. Only 57.1% of parents and teachers in Pompomari Primary School that were not willing and 55.5% in one of the schools were undecided. This finding is not in harmony with Sale (2011) who reports that constant attacks make it even harder for teachers and other stakeholders to persuade parents to let their children stay on at school. The finding underscores the observation made by Okorie (2011) that Nigerians are constantly bedeviled with fears of one attack by one extremist group or the other.

Although parents and teachers expressed their willingness to send their children back to the affected schools, the fear of regular attacks and bomb throwing as reported by Fasan (2011) and Okorie (2011) has constituted a stumbling block to their intentions and that of their children. To determine if male and female significantly differ on effects of insecurity on school attendance, t-test was computed to test the hypothesis raised. The result showed that, male and female significantly differ on effects of insecurity on primary school attendance. This finding is in consonant with that of Bwala (2012) and Eric (2012) who report that as a result of insecurity in the Metropolis, school enrolment has gone down by 28 percent more than any other State in the country. It underscores Sale (2011) position that constant attacks makes it even harder for teachers and other stakeholders to persuade parents to let their children stay on at school. Patrick (2012) observes that in the west coast of Africa, a considerable proportion of student dropout of schools each year.

It also confirms what Fafunwa (1983) notes in the early 1980s that dropout is one of the most serious problems that have continued to bedevil the Nigerian educational system from the colonial administration up to independence in 1960 and even beyond. It is in the light of the above that the observation of Okaga, Chijioke and Innocent (2012) that Nigeria as a nation must make concerted efforts to raise the educational attainment of all its youths who are the leaders of tomorrow especially those that are deprived of regular school attendance because of insecurity and conflicts is important in this regard. If not, the hope for the country seems to be grim if children cannot go to school.

Table 1: Male and female pupils school attendance under the current crisis

S/N	Primary Schools	Male		Female		Total	
		f	%	F	%	F	%
1	Bundigari Primary School	97	69.3	43	30.7	140	6.78
2	Bukar Abba Ali Primary School	93	65.95	48	34.05	141	6.83
3	Central Primary School	106	72.10	41	27.90	147	7.12
4	Damaturu International School	298	49.33	306	50.66	604	29.26
5	Dikumari Primary School	131	62.67	78	37.33	209	10.12
6	Model Primary School	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
7	Nayi-Nawa Primary School	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
8	Pompomari Primary School	183	50.27	181	49.73	364	17.44
9	Sani Daura Primary School	80	69.56	35	30.43	115	5.57
10	Yobe Children's Academy	160	46.78	182	53.22	342	16.56

Source: School register of attendance

Table 2: Responses of Parents and teachers willingness to allow their wards return to school

S/N	Primary Schools	Sample		Willing		Not willing		Undecided
		F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	Bundigari Primary School	9	5	55.6	2	22.2	2	22.2
2	Bukar Abba Ali Primary School	11	6	54.5	2	18.2	3	27.3
3	Central Primary School	12	8	66.6	2	16.6	2	16.6
4	Damaturu International School	13	12	92.3	1	7.6	0	0.0
5	Dikumari Primary School	10	7	70.0	2	20.0	1	10.0
6	Model Primary School	8	5	62.5	2	25.0	1	12.5
7	Nayi-Nawa Primary School	9	3	33.3	1	11.1	5	55.5
8	Pompomari Primary School	14	2	14.3	8	57.1	4	28.5
9	Sani Daura Primary School	12	8	66.6	2	16.7	2	16.7
10	Yobe Children's Academy	9	2	22.2	4	44.4	3	33.3

Source: Field survey, 2013

Table 3: T-test on effects of insecurity on primary school attendance from register

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t – cal.	t– crit.	Remark
Males	60	50.80	10.30	98	5.16	1.66	Significant
Females	40	62.40	12.10				

Source: Field survey, 2013

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The results of the study provide information for educational psychologists and school counsellors to assist the pupils to overcome the emotional distress as a result of the adverse effects of insecurity on their school attendance. Teachers on their part should employ strategies to manage pupils' emotional distress caused by the insecurity. Through counselling intervention, parents that are not willing to send back their children to the affected schools may see the need for them to return their wards to schools or transfer them to other schools that are not affected by the crisis to continue with their studies. Counselling as an intervention strategy may assist an individual adjust well in the society therefore, group counselling for the youths in Damaturu Metropolis is imperative to help the youth embrace peace and dialogue, because no meaningful development will take place without peace and tranquility. This study exposes to the government and public the devastating nature of insecurity and the danger that is exerting on the education system in the north and Damaturu in particular.

This survey was conducted to assess the effect of insecurity on primary school attendance in Damaturu metropolis, Yobe State, Nigeria. Summary of the findings are that the level of school attendance under the crisis situation in Damaturu metropolis has been low but that of male pupils seems to be lower than that of female pupils. Parents and teachers expressed their willingness to send their children back to the affected schools in Damaturu metropolis. The effects of insecurity on primary school attendance were found to be significant in Damaturu metropolis. This situation if left unchecked, will lead to permanent dropout of many school children not only in Damaturu metropolis but in the northern part of the country at large thereby making them available for use as political thugs and exposing them to other economic and social vices. It is incumbent on the government to provide adequate and effective security personnel to all the institutions of learning in Damaturu Metropolis, Yobe State, Nigeria to stop the burning of schools and constant shooting around educational institutions.

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