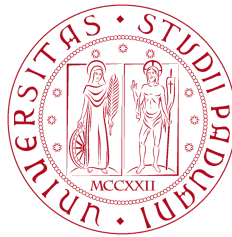


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**Master's degree in  
Human Rights and Multi-level Governance**



THE IMPACT OF EXTREMISM ON THE YOUTH: AN  
ANALYSIS OF THE BAY REGIONS OF NIGERIA

*Supervisor:* Prof. VALENTINE LOMELLINI

*Candidate:* LOIS NIAMH BELL  
Matriculation No. 2046786

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## **ABSTRACT**

Since the foundation of the terrorist group known as Boko Haram in 2002, the BAY regions in northeast Nigeria have been tormented by continuous instability. Precariousness in these regions prevents the population from enjoying their basic human rights and living in peace. Nigerian authorities should prioritise expanding employment opportunities, tackling the threat posed by insurgents, and ensuring equal access to education and safety for its youth. This thesis assesses the disruptions triggered by Boko Haram to the ordinary lives and schooling of Nigerian youth. It demonstrates how these children have had to fend for themselves, have their studies interrupted, live on the streets, and be indefinitely separated from their families. Two research questions guide the direction of this study; the first addresses the origins of Boko Haram and the reasons for its prevailing existence. The second spotlights the various youth groups disproportionately affected by terrorism, kidnappings, forced recruitment, and devastation in the Northeast. This study is supported by the organisation Youths for Peace Building & Development in Africa (YOUPEDA) and ten semi-structured interviews with residents from the BAY regions who have experienced Boko Haram's atrocities firsthand. Through close scrutiny of the existing literature and the accounts of the interviewees, this thesis demonstrates that the origins of Boko Haram can be traced back to poor governance, poverty and unemployment, colonial roots, and animosity towards the West. Additionally, the youth groups most affected are found to be almajiri children, unemployed youth, unaccompanied children, psychologically impacted children, and IDP children. This thesis employs a mixed-method approach, comparing trends in the literature with the primary accounts offered by interviewees. It provides an in-depth review of the Child's Rights Act (2003), specifically parts 1 to 4, and seeks to examine the reluctance of Nigeria's government to satisfy State compliance with these mandates.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>LIST OF ACRONYMS.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>YOUPEDA AND OBI.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>HISTORICAL CONTEXT.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>23</b>
1.1. The Responsibility of the State.....	24
1.1.1 Technically Defeated.....	24
1.1.2 Failed Initiatives.....	27
1.2. Education as a Sin.....	31
1.2.1 Who are Boko Haram?.....	31
1.2.2 Boko Haram versus Christianity.....	34
1.2.3 Education as the Target.....	36
1.3. Education at a Cost.....	39
1.3.1 Security and Militarisation.....	39
1.3.2 Balancing Education.....	40
1.3.3 Frustration and Recruitment.....	42
1.4. Relevance Today in 2023.....	46
<b>CHAPTER 2 - DATA AND LAW.....</b>	<b>48</b>
2.1. Child's Rights Act.....	49
2.1.1 Protection, Care, Survival and Development.....	50
2.1.2 Parental Care, Protection and Maintenance.....	51
2.2.3 Right to Education.....	53
2.2.4 Child Marriage and Betrothal.....	55
2.2.5 Crime, Abduction, and Removal.....	56
2.2.6 Exploitative Labour and Dealing in Children.....	57
2.2.7 Sexual Abuse and Exploitation.....	58
2.2.8 Prohibition of Recruitment.....	60
2.2.9 Best Interest and Protection of a Child.....	61
<b>CHAPTER 3 - EMPIRICAL RESEARCH - THE INTERVIEWS.....</b>	<b>64</b>

3.1. Personal Profiles.....	65
3.2. Discussing Almajiri Children.....	70
3.2.1 Who are the Almajiri Children?.....	71
3.2.2 The Western Education Question.....	74
3.2.3 Allowing Almajiri Children to Succeed.....	75
3.2.4 The Impact of Covid-19.....	77
3.2.5 Vulnerability to Recruitment?.....	78
3.3. Discussing Psychological Impact.....	81
3.3.1 The Chibok Kidnapping.....	82
3.3.2 Parents and Fear.....	83
3.3.3 Posttraumatic Stress and Psychology.....	84
3.3.4 Access to Support.....	85
3.4. Discussing Internally Displaced Persons.....	88
3.4.1 What is an IDP?.....	88
3.4.2 The Intervention of Agencies and Organisations.....	91
3.4.3 Youth Development and Education in IDP Camps.....	93
3.5. Discussing Youth Unemployment.....	95
3.5.1 The Employment Structure in Nigeria.....	96
3.5.2 Linking Unemployment to the Insurgency.....	97
3.5.3 State Action on Unemployment.....	99
3.6 Empirical Research Conclusion.....	101
<b>CHAPTER 4 - COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>105</b>
4.1. What are the root causes of Boko Haram and what fuels its existence?...	106
4.1.1. Colonisation and the West.....	106
4.1.2. Education as a Tool - Combining the Cost and the Sin.....	108
4.1.3. The Fault of the State?.....	113
4.1.4. Poverty and Unemployment.....	116
4.2. Who are the main groups of youth affected by the Boko Haram insurgency in the BAY regions?.....	120
4.2.1. Almajiri Children.....	120
4.2.2. Psychologically Impacted Children.....	121
4.2.3. IDP Children.....	122

4.2.4. Unaccompanied Children.....	122
4.2.5. The Unemployed Youth.....	123
<b>LINKING TO THE CURRENT POLITICAL SPHERE.....</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>MAIN CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>APPENDICES (1 &amp; 2).....</b>	<b>141</b>

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

BAY - Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states

GBV - Gender-based Violence

IDP - Internally Displaced Person

FGM - Female Genital Mutilation

YOUPEDA - Youths for Peace Building & Development in Africa (Organisation)

OCHA - United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

EUAA - European Union Agency for Asylum Seekers

UNODC - United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

ISWAP - Islamic State West Africa Province

JAS - Jama'tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (Boko Haram)

CPSS - Child Protection Sub-Sector

### ***Hausa Terms -***

TSANGAYA - a centre of Islamic learning

MALLAM - a teacher of Islam and Arabic

ALMAJIRI - a child who has been sent from their home to study Islam and the Quran

## INTRODUCTION

### *Religious Violence*

When discussing extremism in Nigeria, the concept of 'religious violence' lies within the foundations of current dominant issues and within the existence of the terrorist group Boko Haram. Casimir et al. (2014, p.60) define religious violence as "a term that covers phenomena where religion, in its diversity, is either the subject or object of violent behaviours." It is usually a situation in which religious tension, built from feelings of marginalisation and segregation, fuels violence. In the case of Nigeria, the relationship between Christianity and Islam has traversed many obstacles and developments, mostly since the arrival of the British and the restructuring of the traditional and cultural dynamics of Nigeria. The development of this relationship and the influence of the West will be discussed and assessed over the course of this thesis, with the intention that the derivation of this religious violence and extremist group will become clearer.

### *The Purpose*

Let this study be a moment for those in the northern regions of Nigeria. A time to bring to the surface the pain that is being felt and the situation that is being caused by current tensions and the existence of the terrorist group Boko Haram. Focussing on the BAY regions, Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe, this research will draw attention to the past 20 years. It will look at how youth development has been affected by terrorism and how the Nigerian State has responded to the insurgency. It will review how the country has been impacted by Boko Haram and if the State has been effective in tackling this group. Analysing what the State has done so far to protect the enjoyment of children's rights, especially the right to education, will allow an assessment of how they can continue to respond in the coming years as this extremist group perseveres. Twenty years of existence demonstrates the power that Boko Haram has obtained and the number of generations they have traumatised. Many of the problems that exist today in Nigeria



outside of this group tend to be rooted in their impact and in the destruction that they have caused.

This research explores why so many children in northeastern Nigeria do not have access to education or even employment if they reach a certain level of study. Boko Haram and the fear they have instilled is one of the primary reasons for this. Parents and children are afraid to leave their homes, their communities, and their areas. The roads may be controlled, insurgents may be waiting for them outside their doors, and members of their own community can become a threat, acting out of desperation. Many have lost their family, their parents, their children, or their friends during Boko Haram attacks. In some cases, they do not know whether their family and friends are alive, kidnapped, or displaced. This paper will expose the most affected groups of children, who they are and what education they have access to. It will discuss this research with people on the ground in the BAY regions; people who are committed to making a change and who have felt the impact of Boko Haram on their lives and communities themselves. The interviewees offer a unique experience to learn and become aware of the situation faced in the north of Nigeria. They discuss the sacrifices that they have had to make and describe the situations in which they have witnessed Boko Haram attacks.

The two main research questions that will be addressed are:

1. What are the root causes of Boko Haram and what fuels its existence?
2. Who are the main groups of youth affected by the Boko Haram insurgency in the BAY regions?

These research questions were chosen with the aim of linking the idea of youth development and the Boko Haram uprising. The development of youth can be assessed by determining what allows Boko Haram to continue to survive and who is most affected by this in the process. Of course, all groups in the northeast of Nigeria are affected by the threat of terrorism; however, youth become particularly important when considering the tendency of Boko Haram to attack schools and kidnap young children. Children in Nigeria deserve safety; they are the future of the country and to develop

Nigeria, they need a stable education. During this research, the number of children affected will be exposed and data on those who have been displaced, who are out-of-school, who have been forced to work, or recruited will be outlined.

## **YOUPEDA AND OBI**

### ***What is YOUPEDA (2023)?***

YOUPEDA, which stands for “Youth for Peacebuilding & Development in Africa”, was established in 2007 and became recognised as an association in 2008. The creation of this association was derived from the desire to recognise young people and their potential to bring about positive change. Currently, YOUPEDA builds projects that allow youth to use this potential to learn skills, find safety, and become self-reliant. With the support of a permanent membership board, World Faith (2013), various international organisations, and other members throughout Nigeria, YOUPEDA creates training and skill-building sessions, and schemes that form a sense of community and support. For example, one of their current programmes that began in 2019 consisted of bringing together a group of women survivors of sexual violence and the impact of terrorism. Some of them lost their families and arrived in Abuja with nothing. YOUPEDA began a farming project and rented an area of farmland that allowed these women to come together and be self-reliant. The programme has been running for four years and has been successful in helping these women acquire skills, build confidence, and form relationships. YOUPEDA were able to train the children, provide medical care, and create a sphere of peaceful co-existence without the threats and dangers that they escaped from. They promoted collaboration and acceptance of one another through the harvesting and upkeep of the land and created a documentary based on this. Other similar training programmes allow youth to learn skills such as sewing, bag making, cultivating, and selling goods. YOUPEDA believes in the importance of young people as the change and for a future of peace and development. When they go to schools and universities, they train students and teachers to build peace and promote a future where they can be successful. Obi spoke of the challenges that YOUPEDA faces in terms of growing its projects. He said, “Our dreams are bigger than us” and explained that

sometimes as a smaller organisation, they struggle to access the resources they need for their plans. However, YOUPEDA's strength is that it is community-based and is available to help locally when needed. They have connections with young people in the communities and can engage with real information and stories.

### ***Who is Obi Peter Onyeigwe?***

Obi is a human rights advocate from the southeast of Nigeria. He currently lives in Abuja, is a business entrepreneur, and is a member of the YOUPEDA board. In some of his recent work, Obi was part of the team of youth peacebuilders that promoted the United Nations Security Council Resolution on Youth Peace and Security in Nigeria (Del Felice and Onyeigwe, 2019). This resolution aimed to promote the participation of youth in the implementation of Nigerian policy and future peacebuilding. Obi is also one of the co-editors of the 2018 book titled "Youth in Africa: Agents of Change" (Del Felice and Onyeigwe, 2019). This book aims to recognise the potential of youth in Africa and promote programmes that help create responsible and self-reliant adults. The book emphasises the fact that young people are not the problem in Nigeria and should, in fact, be considered the solution to a peaceful future in the country. Obi strongly believes that the youth, if given the right opportunities, are the hope of Nigeria. He says that often people do not get to hear about the success stories of young people because everyone is so engrossed in politics and the negative aspects that occur in society.

### ***How did the idea for YOUPEDA (2023) come about?***

After Obi completed his studies, he went to serve in one of the platoons of the Nigerian National Youth Service (NYIC). He was deployed to the northern state of Sokoto, where his team lived in a camp made up of Christians and Muslims. Obi noted that he went to serve at a time when Sharia law was an area of conflict, he was afraid to move to a Sharia state as he had heard stories of people having their hands chopped off and the existence of various political tensions. During his time at camp and paramilitary training, there were some interfaith tensions within the platoons. However, different platoons were assigned different chores and jobs, and one night in particular Obi's

platoon was required to cook for the camp. Obi noted that accessing food outside the camp was very expensive and that each member of the platoon relied on the food provided at the camp. A man did not show up for his camp meal that night, and due to the number of people fed, he went unnoticed. However, upon returning, this man, one of the few Muslims who were the minority in the camp, realised that he had been forgotten during the food service. Consequently, tension began to build, and he claimed that he was being marginalised and segregated from the rest of the team. This kind of interfaith conflict left Obi feeling uneasy; conflict between faiths, small or large, can lead to dangerous consequences, and Obi knew this, so he stepped in. Obi decided to offer his portion of the food to his fellow platoon member and leave himself in the difficult situation of having to obtain food alternatively. From this moment on, people turned to Obi as a problem solver and mediator for interfaith dialogue and moments of conflict within the camp. He continued to engage and train groups of youth; he learnt little bits of the local language, but mostly communicated in English. Obi noted at this time that small situations of conflict could be easily resolved and that tensions between people of different faiths could be settled within groups of youth. He realised that this kind of cooperation and understanding could continue into their adulthood, which could begin to reduce tensions in the future. From this experience, Obi wrote a book called “Youth Co-members in Sharia Islamic States in Nigeria”. After his year of service with the NYIC, Obi was given a state award and recognition by the Sultan of the state where he served.

YOUPEDA, which was originally named Youth Aid Society of Nigeria (YASON), and Obi Peter Onyeigwe have been crucial parts of developing this research. In particular, they played a role in acquiring the interviewees and contextualising the information and data found. Obi is passionate about peacebuilding, maintaining hope, and using kindness to prevent conflict. He offered his knowledge and experience of the situation in Nigeria and supported the research conducted for this thesis.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Research Design and Strategy***

The purpose of this methodology is to outline the research design and strategy followed in the creation of this thesis. It will describe the data collection methods used and the ethical considerations and limitations that had to be contemplated. It will conclude with a summary of the main findings and how they will help contribute to future research in this domain. This thesis uses primary empirical research; it combines existing literature with qualitative data retrieved through primary source interviews to determine how the insurgency affects different groups of youth in the northeast of Nigeria. It is an approach that involves the voices of real people on the ground, graduates, workers, mothers, and fathers, some employed, others not. It includes people who were born and raised in the BAY regions, who have suffered and seen others around them suffer; some of them have had direct experience with Boko Haram, and others have been impacted indirectly. They have faced situations that they should never have faced, they have fought for their families, and they have worked hard to be where they are today.

To begin this research, many associations and organisations were contacted in the hope that someone would agree to connect this project to Nigeria and help develop this research. Obi, with YOUPEDA (2023), replied via email, to discuss the aims of this thesis and the research that was planned. The focus of this research worked well into the mission of YOUPEDA to empower the youth and the work they do which is discussed above. This research links to the importance they place on the youth, the idea of spotting and recognising the groups that are most affected and exposing one of the main reasons for their struggles: Boko Haram. Obi aided in the discussion surrounding young people and how the insecurity in the northeast of Nigeria impacts their lifestyle. Obi, who has worked with many different students for their research projects, has connections all over the world and spoke of the lack of recognition that Nigeria is receiving globally and especially the lack of awareness of what is occurring in Nigeria in the West.

Most of the interviewees are attending or have attended university, and many of them moved to the city for university but grew up in small villages and communities in the Northeast. Some of them were raised in the city their entire lives and therefore have seen how the dynamics of the metropolitan areas have developed since the beginning of the insurgency, the increase in security, and the growth of fear. When selecting the interviewees, the main requirement was that they currently reside within a BAY state. The interviewee collection was then adapted to obtain an equal gender balance. Unfortunately, during the period in which these interviews took place, it was not possible to obtain a perfectly equal balance of men and women. Although there were fewer female candidates, women remained an important focus, specifically since some of the interviewees worked with victims of gender-based violence. Another goal in selecting the interviewees was to speak to a diverse range of people, single and married, Christian and Muslim, from urban and rural areas, employed and unemployed, all of whom have witnessed the changes in their areas since the rise of Boko Haram.

The interviewees were found by Obi, who undertook the role of gatekeeper and sent over the profiles of each of those interested in participating before the interviews took place. In this way, the questions could be prepared and adapted to each candidate. Using the experiences of these candidates, this thesis was able to spot some of the most prominent issues that the youth face in the Northeast. The questions asked during the interviews followed a base structure but were then adapted to the personal experiences of each of the interviewees. In general, the questions aimed to form a personal profile of each candidate and then obtain their opinion on the groups of youth most impacted by the insurgency and their opinion on how Boko Haram formed and is fuelled. Furthermore, the questions aimed to pinpoint the interruptions during the education of the candidates and the reasons for these interruptions, most often related to Boko Haram or security threats to communities and educational institutions. Highlighted was also some internal insight into the actions of the State and what they have done to protect their citizens. An example of some of the base questions used include the following.

- “In what state do you reside?”
- “Can you tell me about your educational background?”

- “Did you face interruptions during your studies?”
- “Are there many children not attending school in your state?”
- “Have you ever witnessed a Boko Haram attack?”
- “Who are the groups most affected by terrorism in the Northeast?”
- “Do victims of terrorist attacks have access to psychological support or counselling?”
- “What has the State done to protect the population during and after the Boko Haram attacks?”
- “How would you describe the situation in Nigeria to an outsider?”

### ***Ethical Considerations***

These semi-structured interviews were mostly conducted via online platforms, virtually, and often with the use of a webcam or video camera. However, since in the northeast of Nigeria, there are many problems with network providers, many of the citizen providers are subjected to corruption, and interviewees often lost the signal or went into total blackout during our calls. In this case, the communication was switched to regular phone calls from a UK network provider. Obi would connect online and listen in on the phone calls. Each interview was recorded, with the consent of the interviewees, and then transcribed to decipher each part of the information. Obi was present for each and every conversation and helped at times when language barriers arose, or the network failed. Some of the language barriers were recovered during the transcription of the interviews; however, parts lost due to network issues were sometimes irretrievable.

In terms of the ethics procedure, as specified, each interviewee was asked at the beginning of the video and telephone interviews if the conversation could be recorded. Once the conversations ended, the interviewee’s emails were obtained, and an exchange of information and documents took place. Originally, the consent form was sent by email as a PDF. This was problematic as many of the interviewees were unable to print the document, sign it, and scan it to send it back. The first interviewee, Auwal, was able to find a way to sign a piece of paper and add it to the PDF form. After realising that the process of obtaining the consent forms would be difficult, a new solution was necessary.

The method was changed and began to use the DocuSign (2023) online platform; this platform allowed documents to be sent with interactive capacities, text boxes to fill and draw boxes to sign. The consent form included the question of anonymity, and each interviewee was able to select whether they preferred to be anonymous. If they chose to be anonymous, their name was changed, and a fake name was used when discussing and analysing the information they provided. The use of fake names versus real names for various of the interviewee candidates was not specified; this is to protect their data. For some of the interviewees, participating in this research was valuable to them, and they wanted their stories to be told. During the research project, with the use of mini-personal profiles and the incorporation of our discussions, it is hoped that their stories will be shared as they desire them to be.

Another challenge faced was the time it took some of the interviewees to respond to the consent form and complete it online. Most were done within a week after the interview, following a discussion over email. Others were done with the help of Obi who reached out to them in December 2022 and January 2023. The last ones were completed at the beginning of February 2023, a couple of months later. However, unfortunately, during this time, one of the interviewees and one of the few women involved in this research decided to withdraw from the project. She no longer wanted her information to be shared. This occurred during the week before the Nigerian presidential elections of February 2023. Early 2023 has been a time of added hardship and struggle for Nigeria, and they have been suffering from an extreme cash shortage (Orjinmo, 2023). The central bank decided to change the cash notes and update them (africanews, 2023). This has caused major problems, specifically for the poorer parts of the country, which function solely with the use of cash and do not have access to online banking. As Obi noted that, “Nigeria is a cash-based economy” (Obi, 2023), and without access to cash, even those with work and money were left to struggle. Obi explained that people had been queuing for more than 24 hours straight for the new cash notes and then were sent home with nothing. These extenuating circumstances could be the reason why one of the interviewees was lost in the process of this research project and exposed some of the challenges people in Nigeria are facing in 2023. Challenges that come in addition to current insecurity and poverty in the North.



### *Data Analysis and Structure*

The use of existing academic literature and articles allowed the comparison of previous research on Boko Haram, its impact, and its goals with the specific determination of which groups of youth are struggling due to the existence of these extremists. Whilst analysing the content and theory of these external sources, three branches of interest were identified that reappeared in each of the articles. These three branches of analysis helped determine the relationship between the State, the people, and the terrorists. By analysing previous research, a pattern was determined and an overall idea of the relationship between these three main actors. The literature helped expose the aspects that have influenced and impacted the development and life of young people in Nigeria since the beginning of the insurgency. It also helped to establish who Boko Haram are and who they are impacting. This thesis focusses on one of the most impacted groups, the youth. So many people have had their lives affected by terrorism that terrorists have become normal. Fear of leaving your house, feeling unprotected, children living on the streets, terrorists hidden within the population, coercion, kidnappings, gunshots, and bombs should not be considered everyday life. The State has to find a solution to bring the insurgency to an end once and for all.

As mentioned, the structure of this paper began with the analysis of the outside literature and the focus on people, the State, and terrorists. The second part, with the help of the existing literature and quantitative sources, also helped create a section on data and law. This part of the thesis studies various articles of the Child's Rights Act and which of these articles the Nigerian government is failing to comply with. It takes statistical sources from various organisations that have collected data to assess economic, social, and political movements and situations in Nigeria. For example, OCHA (2022) conducted the "Humanitarian Needs Overview" which helped to outline those in need and the various types of crises in Nigeria. Other organisations have also published reports, such as the Human Rights Commission (2023), the Child Protection Sub-Sector (2020), UNICEF (2021), Human Rights Watch (2021), UNODC (2017) and the World Bank (2023). With the data collected in this section and with the help of the

theoretical framework, a solid base was formed to describe the situation in Nigeria and answer the research questions.

Furthermore, the discussions with the interviewees then helped to develop on the different branches and actors initially discussed in the theoretical framework, the data, and the law. Interviewees helped determine the role of people and the support or lack of support they are achieving from the State. It also exposed more intimately the relationship between people and terrorists and the fear and insecurity that have been instilled in the population. This section will develop on the different groups of youth that have been anchored during literature and discussions. The empirical research is divided into subsections for each group of youths discussed. It builds on who they are and the challenges they face in Northeast Nigeria. It is divided into five sections, the 'Personal Profiles' of interviewees, Almajiri Children, Psychologically Impacted Children, Internally Displaced Children, and Unemployed Youth. Although this chapter determines the groups of young people that are significantly affected by insecurity in Northeast Nigeria, it does not mean that the impacted people stop there. There are many smaller groups of youth who remain at a severe disadvantage and suffer from insecurity. Further research could help us determine who these other groups are.

### ***Key Findings***

The key findings during this research demonstrate links between different aspects that have fuelled Boko Haram and also been fuelled by this insurgency. It looks at the dynamics between poverty and unemployment, education as a sin, a cost, and a tool. It also looks at the role of the State and whether its actions have played a part in the survival of Boko Haram for more than 20 years. The findings also demonstrate various groups of youth that have been severely affected and held back by the insecurity in Northeast Nigeria. The last chapter conducts a comparative analysis based on the theoretical framework, the data and law, and the empirical data sections. It brings together the aspects discussed in all three parts of the paper to spot gaps and highlight areas of similarity. It directly confronts the two research questions and divides the answer into different categories. For the first question asking what the root cause and

fuel of Boko Haram are, the subtitles and answers are as follows. Colonisation and the West, Education as a Tool, the Responsibility of the State, and Poverty and Unemployment. For the second research question, asking which groups of youth are the most impacted, the answer and subtitles are divided into almajiri children, psychologically impacted children, IDP children, unaccompanied children, and unemployed youth. The research questions were able to be answered with the help of each of the sections and the insight they offered.

To highlight some of the answers given by the interviewees that helped this article to achieve an understanding of the research question determining the most affected youth...

- Mustapha - *“Families flee, parents die, or parents killed by unknown gunmen, sometimes they are labelled as kidnappers, bandits. Security operatives are aware of their doings, and nobody is ever intervening, people are dying, people are being killed, children are homeless, parents flee, they leave behind their families, babies don’t have where to sleep, no medication, quality of life is no longer assured, there are treated, they are forced.”*
- Auwal - *“If you come to our place, to our community, you will see the highest number of almajiri right now. I cannot count them myself, they are uncountable right now”*
- Kanko - *“Even in my street almajiri children come every morning begging for food saying help us”.*
- Mustapha - *“People in IDP camps are deprived, isolated, they do not enjoy some of their basic rights”.*
- Yakin - *“The number of people that are needing IDP camps is beyond imagination, and they are becoming a cramped place”.*

- Mustapha - *“These children I am talking about, they live, they are not living with their parents, they are roaming about, they are unaccompanied, they are under no control of anybody.”*
- Adeolu - *“There is no peace here, so there is no way you can read your book and comprehend so psychologically you will be disturbed”.*
- Kanko - *“There is this psychological fear, whenever I am driving in the city, I think oh a bomb could go off here, so the impact is on everybody in the northeast as far as you reside here or have relatives here there is impact.”*
- Ishaya - *“Boko Haram, they are present because from our state to Yobe, if you are going to use public transportation sometimes, they come out and kidnap people.”*
- Adeolu - *“Most children that are vulnerable are within the age of the youth, within the range of 15-30 years, [...] If a person is in tertiary institutions they are seriously affected. Why? Because that person is in the age of making a decision whether positive or negative. So from there, it will affect him seriously.”*
- Auwal - *“The problems the youth are facing here is that there is too much of jobless, every year you see graduates at the end and then unemployment is there, there is no any more company in the Northeast.”*
- Adeolu - *“A lack of employment it seems to affect the youth because so many of them they have graduated and then there is no employment and then you don't have anything to do so you start thinking ah what will I do next, then for that reason because of the influence of peer groups, then they will push you because you are looking for employment and there's no employment.”*

## ***Results and Limitations***

The results of this research demonstrate the many layers of issues that affect northeastern Nigeria because of the insurgency. It touches upon other factors like the pandemic and climate crises that have worsened the situation. Most of all, it allows for the focus on the youth, as people who feel the greatest impact, and as those who are the future of Nigeria. The findings help in the recognition of the fact that the insurgency is rooted deeper than what is usually understood; terrorism comes from feelings of neglect that date back to the colonial period and back to the growth of Christianity and wealth in the South. However, it also links with the State and its struggle to accommodate and support the entire population of Nigeria. It exposes the idea that the Northeast is often pushed aside, considered a no-go zone, and left to fend and fight for itself. The results aim to spread awareness of the suffering that is occurring in the North and that needs to be confronted and solved. They also aim to help readers realise how the impact of poverty, unemployment, insurgency, and fear is feeding into the younger generations. It is passed on to children who have no choice but to continue to face the situation in which they are born. As the number of children increases, the number of almajiri children, unaccompanied children, out-of-school children, traumatised children, and dying children also increases.

The limitations of this study could include the fact that the interviews were only conducted with a small number of people. Although the number of people involved were all very invested stakeholders in the situation and offered incredible support, they remain a small percentage of those affected by the terror in the Northeast. What is interesting is the fact that most of the interviewees are humanitarian workers or, in some way, trying to help their communities. They are also people who have grown up as youth affected by terrorism, some of whom have been directly impacted by insurgents and witnessed horrific and traumatic events.

This leads to a second limitation that there are many more groups of youth and groups of the northeastern population that are also suffering and deserve recognition too. For example, Mustapha, whose interview has been included in Appendix 1, brings to the

attention of this paper the victims of sexual assault and those who are subjected to unwanted pregnancies. He shared stories and experiences of children as young as four days of age. Although this research outlines some of the largest potential groups of young people impacted, it does not include all groups of children who suffer from the actions of insurgents and the struggles faced in the north of Nigeria. Further research should be conducted on those who are victims of sexual violence, and other significant groups impacted regularly by the prevailing existence of conflict in the Northeast.

## **HISTORY AND CONTEXT**

### ***NIGERIA***

Nigeria is located in the northwest of Africa, surrounded by Benin, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. It is a country that has an unfortunate reputation around the world due to insecurity, terror threats, and unstable politics (Ngadaonye, 2021). Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, according to Worldometer (2022), it has nearly 219 million people, and the population continues to grow at a yearly rate of around 2.6%. Lagos, the capital city, has the highest population in the country, reaching around 9 million people (Worldometer, 2022). It is a place with extremely interesting cultural and ethnic diversity and where over 520 languages are spoken (Ngadaonye, 2021). The bad reputation often associated with Nigeria neglects its beauty, the potential of the Nigerian people, and the work that has been done collectively to develop the country. Falola and Heaton (2008) emphasise the positive impact and influence of social development that Nigerian people have had in countries all over the world. They note that this is due to the strong sense of community that Nigerians have carried with them while migrating and starting up in new countries. As the population of Nigeria continues to grow, their movements and influence will keep playing a role in culture sharing, global affairs, and integration (Falola and Heaton, 2008). Although Nigeria has been significantly impacted by increasing terrorism, climate change, unemployment, and mass poverty, it is also a place filled with many natural and human resources. The mineral and material resources that can be found in Nigeria include coal, oil, ore, iron, zinc, tin, limestone, lead, and niobium (Usman, 2015). Ngadaonye (2021) claims that it is a country where human potential is huge and a place where much business and science is conducted.

Looking back historically, by the end of the nineteenth century, a significant divide was visible between the North and the South of Nigeria (Falola and Heaton, 2008). Falola and Heaton (2008) noted that the North was governed based on Islamic law, and the South remained in conflict, mostly run by warlords. They further discuss how the economy was impacted by the abolition of slavery at this time, noting that the slave trade industry was replaced by the trade of palm oil. Falola and Heaton (2008) outline

that although the slave trade was abolished in 1807, it was not actually enforced until the 1850s. They claim that Britain saw potential in Nigeria in terms of commerce and return; they colonised it in the late nineteenth century, a process that took around 40 years to 'accomplish'. The process involved the use of force and highly unethical practices by the British, "colonialism scarred Nigeria and affected it greatly" (Siollun, 2021, p.334). Bertoni et al. (2019) noted that Nigeria obtained independence in 1960, but that until 1999 the country faced an unpeaceful transition involving various coups and conflicts under military rule. Nigeria struggled to achieve political unity, and the northern and southern regions have always remained in some ways divided (Falola and Heaton, 2008). A correlation can be found when looking at the colonisation of Nigeria and the subsequent rise of Christianity and Western influence (Siollun, 2021). Siollun (2021, p.329) wrote that "the Muslim areas of the North [...] largely rejected the British language, religion, and educational system". The arrival of the British began some uneasy feelings towards the West by the Muslims in the North. Usman (2015) claims that it is the divide and "the quest of the North to Islamise Nigeria" that fuelled the rise of extremist groups that are seen now in contemporary Nigeria.

Another important aspect of Nigeria's influence globally is its oil reserves and the significance that these reserves hold in other countries due to ever-increasing energy needs. "Fortunately for Britain and unfortunately for West Africans, the raw commodities that Britain required to power its industrial revolution were in the Niger River area" (Siollun, 2021, p.45). The British colonisers began to take advantage of Nigeria's natural resources by the 19th century; this was initiated with palm oil and rubber and was before anyone had realised the existence and value of other oils "beneath their feet" (Siollun, 2021, p.46). Even after independence in Nigeria, the British still played a significant role in Nigeria's oil reserves and the potential of the oil industry (Explained, 2021). An 'oil boom' occurred in the 1970s when profits and revenues peaked; however, it resulted in significant impacts on the environment and only helped fuel the prosperity of some Nigerians rather than the country as a whole (Del Felice and Onyeigwe, 2019). Oweoko (2017, p.80) agreed that even once civilian rule had returned in 1999, "the benefit of the oil wealth was still going to the elite, widening the gap between the rich and the poor". Del Felice and Onyeigwe (2019,



p.156) recounted that some parts of the young population were angry about the “environmental degradation” and the exclusion from the returns of the industry. They claimed that many violent terror groups began to react to this; however, the State offered amnesty and implemented programmes for these youths in order to address their anger and feelings of neglect and frustration. The book “Youth in Africa, Agents of Change” demonstrates this as an occasion where the Nigerian State effectively dealt with a rise in terrorist actions and sought an answer and solution (Del Felice and Onyeigwe, 2019).

Between independence in 1960 and the first presidential election in 1999, military leaders led the State, and growth in Christianity occurred discreetly throughout this time (Cook, 2011). Cook (2011) notes that the Muslim population was too focused on debates between the two branches Sufi and Salafi, that they did not notice this growth in Christianity which led to the first president being Christian in 1999, Olusegun Obasanjo. Discontent with the growth of Christian rule led to further division between the North and the South, and most of the Muslim population settled on Sharia domination in the northern states (Cook, 2011). Cook (2011) describes that Sharia was a form of Islam that both the Sufi and Salafi branches had come to agree on. However, Walker (2012) explained that with the threat imposed by the West and various parts of the population not complying with Sharia, a stricter and different understanding of Sharia law began to emerge. The conflict and tension began as those who did not follow Sharia law put themselves at risk, and insurgent groups like Boko Haram began to rise believing in this “strict interpretation of Sharia” (Walker, 2012, p.14).

The first appearance of Boko Haram’s foundations was in 2002 before the group was known as Boko Haram, and when they represented an organisation with the aim of re-establishing “true Islamic law” (Walker, 2012, p.2). It was not until around 2004, that the group returned under Mohammed Yusuf and became known as Boko Haram, which in Hausa means “Western education is forbidden” (Walker, 2012, p.3). Although often thought to be related to the 9/11 attacks in the United States, Boko Haram’s formation does not seem to have any connection to this event. In 2004, the US Embassy claimed that Boko Haram had no link to jihadism and was not an international threat (Walker,

2012). Agbiboa (2013) noted that only in 2012 did the group begin to have international links with Al-Qaeda. He outlined that Yusuf was against the government and believed that they were anti-Islamic, “Christian dominated” and corrupt (Agbiboa, 2013, p.5). He created an Islamic school in Maiduguri, which was considered the correct form of education system by supporters of Boko Haram. He then began to share his ideologies, talk to communities, speak at university conferences, and fuel the number of fighters supporting his movement. Over time, many believed in his ideology and the desire for a theocratic state; his opinions grew in popularity, and people became angrier toward the State, the Christians, and the West (BBC Africa, 2020). Many university students were interested in what Mohammed had to say (BBC Africa, 2020). The Boko Haram group began to protest against the authorities and the Christian control that they felt was too powerful and not inclusive of the entire population.

Bertoni et al. (2019, p.3) outlined the fact that since 2009, Boko Haram has begun a full-blown fight against the government in Nigeria, they labelled it “a turning point for violence in the region”. In 2009, the group tried to take over the government, causing chaos in the streets and killing 800 people (BBC Africa, 2020). During this time, the government managed to take the life of Mohammed Yusuf, which led them to claim that they had defeated the threat posed by Boko Haram (Higazi, 2016). In the theoretical framework section of this thesis, the proclamation of premature defeat will be discussed. The government was wrong because following the death of their leader, Abubakar Shekau, one of Yusuf’s mentees, appeared to take the role and initiated Boko Haram’s so-called “second phase” (Higazi, 2016: p.104). Under the rule of Shekau, Boko Haram only became more deadly and managed to gain control of most of Borno state by 2015 (BBC Africa, 2020). Obaji Jr (2021) recounts that an increase in attacks occurred on State institutions, innocent villages, and schools, mostly those that did not follow Islamic education. He states that it is particularly girls' schools, as the idea of women in education, especially Western education, was contrary to Boko Haram beliefs. Educational institutions have become a place of danger, rather than safety, and thousands of girls in the northern regions of Nigeria have been kidnapped by the group and taken to terrorist camps (Obaji Jr, 2021). While some managed to escape, many remain in captivity (Khalid and Fitzgerald, 2022). Obaji Jr (2021) notes that it is

schoolchildren who are kidnapped, killed, or forced to join Boko Haram soldiers in their mission. He says that attacking schools has a “huge economic benefit” for Boko Haram and puts significant pressure on the government (Obaji Jr, 2021).

Today, Boko Haram is split in two, in the Northeast and the Northwest - ISWAP in the West and Boko Haram/ Jama’tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awati wal’Jihad (JAS) in the East (BBC Africa, 2020). This occurred after the government of Nigeria claimed back the territory of Gwoza, which Boko Haram had been using as its capital. Shekau had allied with the Islamic State (IS), and under the influence of the IS, Boko Haram split into two, with Abu Musab Al-Barnawi, Mohammed Yusuf’s son, taking the lead of the new branch ISWAP (BBC Africa, 2020). The European Union Agency for Asylum Seekers (2021) claimed that the group was divided due to tensions surrounding “indiscriminate murder”, including killing Muslims; ISWAP does not agree with the targeting of Muslims. The two branches of Boko Haram now have different objectives. ISWAP wants to gain the support of communities on their territory, establish their own judicial system, have economic independence and be the dominant authority of the northwestern regions (BBC Africa, 2020). Boko Haram does not appear to have an evident aim apart from destroying the Western influence and terrorising the population (BBC Africa, 2020). The focus of this research is on the northeastern regions, where the JAS branch of Boko Haram remains in operation. The dynamics of the group have however changed since the death of Shekau in 2021 during fighting, leaving many of his followers joining ISWAP and other groups (OCHA, 2022, p.13).

Terrorism was not new to the northeast of Nigeria before 2002. In the 1980s, a Cameroonian man, Muhammadu Marwa, led the “Maitatsine” uprising (Isichei, 1987). He claimed that he was a prophet and that those who disagreed with his ideologies were disagreeing with Allah (Isichei, 1987). This group started attacks and killed many people in the northern regions of Nigeria. This included hostilities in Maiduguri, Kaduna, and Yola (Isichei, 1987). Saad (1988, p.111) described Muhammadu Marwa as a “spiritual leader of an Islamic millenarian cult”. This is a description that many would have given to Mohammed Yusuf, the first leader of Boko Haram. It is evident that tensions between the Muslim parts of northern Nigeria have existed for far longer than

Boko Haram. Interestingly, the Maitatsine uprising also appeared shortly after the colonial independence of Nigeria. Aguwa (1997, p.336) noted that the link between Christianity and “colonial governments” is part of the reason why some Muslims feel threatened and believe that Christians are part of a “Western force of conquest and imperialism”. Aguwa’s (1997) article was written long before the foundation of Boko Haram but seems somewhat familiar with the theories surrounding Boko Haram’s survival and prominence today. Both groups derived from a leader who believed that others are infidels and that the West is a threat.

### *The Structure of Contemporary Nigeria*

Nigeria remains divided in terms of religion and ethnicity, the North has a majority Muslim population, and the South is Christian. Gwadabe et al. (2018) explain that the North is dominated by the Hausa or Fulani tribes, and the South by the Yoruba and Igbo tribes. The Hausa tribe is the largest ethnic group and represents 30% of the population, followed by Yoruba and Igbo, which represent approximately 15% each (Statista, 2018). The focal regions for this research are the BAY regions, Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2019) recently published the “2019 Report on Poverty and Inequality”, which described that more than 80 million people in Nigeria live in poverty. Their statistics excluded Borno but highlighted that in Adamawa the poverty headcount rate was 75.41; in Yobe it was 72.34; and in Borno the statistics were non-existent. Borno state was not included in the report due to the impossibility to acquire data that would represent the whole state; samples could only be taken from households that were “accessible or safe to visit” (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Borno state is where Boko Haram formed and assigned its headquarters (Emmanuelar, 2015); since then, they have been pushed out of the capital city in Borno, Maiduguri, and more toward the rural areas in the Northeast (Akinola, 2023). Akinola (2023) notes that Maiduguri and many territories are now more protected by security forces; however, the main roads out of the cities, and some rural areas remain dangerous. He claims that although the group has lost some power, it persists and continues to destroy the livelihoods of Nigerians, and to terrorise rural areas in the BAY regions.

## **CHAPTER 1 - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This thesis aims to open the dialogue on youth development in Nigeria; it intends to assess the repercussions caused by the insurgency and further beyond the terror, to explore the situations facing the population of Nigeria today. It investigates the most impacted youth groups and the direct impacts on their education, health, and well-being, and exposes how extreme poverty, the role of the State, and feelings of neglect have limited development. To begin with, a theoretical review of the literature on Boko Haram and its connection to youth development in Nigeria is useful. It shows that Boko Haram has already been somewhat studied and that various of its attacks have been brought to international attention, but that there remains a lack of support coming from the Nigerian State internally and from international actors externally. To start this discussion, this literature highlights the dynamics in Nigeria after the surge of terrorism; it looks at the situation from three angles: “The Responsibility of the State”, “Education as a Sin”, and “Education at a Cost”. The first assesses the aim of Boko Haram to destroy the State and the State's response to this; the second exposes the intentions of Boko Haram to influence and coerce the population. The third unveils the backlash on the population, who fear Boko Haram and are in need of sufficient protection from the State. These three perspectives divide Nigeria into three main groups: the people, the terrorists, and the State.

This review is important in assessing how the State has dealt with the insurgency and what it has done to protect its citizens in times of conflict. It is also significant in the evaluation of why this terrorist group arose and began to commit the horrors they continue to cause today. Although the threat of Boko Haram is decreasing, it is still very much present in the northeast of Nigeria; People within the BAY states and beyond cannot live in peace. These insurgent groups along with other playing factors are the reason why youth development and the rights of children in Nigeria are still not fully enjoyed. Terror and trauma have affected millions of families and children in Nigeria. Children are left without their parents; parents are left without their children or unsure of where their children are. People are struggling and dying, and there is a need for more to be done to prevent this from continuing.

## **1.1 The Responsibility of the State**

This section aims to look at studies scrutinising the work of the State in the combat against Boko Haram. The different ways in which the State has responded, divided, and chosen to deal with this extremist group will be investigated. An inspection of the State's use of security forces will be conducted and the coherency of communication and dialogue between regions and governors will be challenged. This section also pinpoints the perplexing link, based on various studies, between attacks on the Nigerian State and attacks on education in Nigeria.

### ***1.1.1 Technically Defeated***

The current president, President Buhari, has made many speeches on his strategies to conquer Boko Haram, however, in 2016 claimed:

*“I think technically we have won the war because people are going back into their neighbourhoods”* (Buhari, 2016)

These words by President Buhari aimed to settle the population and highlight the work that had been done to tackle Boko Haram. This claim that Boko Haram had been 'technically defeated' leaves a sentiment of unease rather than settlement. It tells the population that Boko Haram is still present, is still a threat, and remains able to commit attacks. Okeowo (2017) investigates the general opinion on the government and its reaction to the kidnapping of Chibok girls. The Chibok kidnapping case was an act of terror that occurred in 2014 when Boko Haram entered a girls' school in Chibok and abducted more than 200 girls (Irabor, 2022). Okeowo (2017, p.186) describes that the insurgents set the school on fire and proceeded to leave the girl's shoes lined up outside the burnt-down establishment. She recounts that the girls were forced to follow this group, they were sexually assaulted, terrorised, starved, and beaten. Okeowo (2017, p.194) claims that under the leadership of President Goodluck Jonathan, there was next to no hope of the State conquering Boko Haram. They had no idea where the group's camps were, and where the girls were, and meanwhile, other attacks and kidnappings

were still occurring every day (Khalid and Fitzgerald, 2022). In late 2014, President Jonathan Goodluck managed to negotiate the release of many of the Chibok girls; however, at the same time, others were being abducted in Adamawa state (Oweoko, 2017). Oweoko (2017, p.194) claimed that President Goodluck Jonathan thought that Boko Haram was a “creation of northern Muslim leaders”; he assumed that they were out to act against him, and therefore he played the game of ignorance rather than prioritising the people who were being directly affected. She adds that when President Muhammadu Buhari was elected in 2015, he seemed more willing to enter and raid Boko Haram camps and hideouts; he offered a glimpse of hope. Higazi (2016) agrees and outlines that during Goodluck Jonathan’s presidency until 2015, the military was underprepared and did not support the basic enjoyment of the rights of civilians. He claims that since the leadership under Mohammadu Buhari, Boko Haram has been significantly weakened and has not had popular support. It is possible that when Buhari said that the group was ‘technically defeated’, he was referring to some achievements of the State that forced Boko Haram to withdraw from many regions, mostly in the South of Nigeria. However, these are steps in the right direction, rather than a reason to prematurely profess a win. By proclaiming a win, it demonstrates a withdrawal of efforts and perhaps a sign that the State, from that point on, was going to decrease their work towards eliminating the terrorist group completely.

Similar to the period of time following 2009 when their leader was murdered and Boko Haram stepped back to restructure, since 2016 the group has again stepped back to create new strategies and rebuild for return (Africa Research Bulletin, 2016). 2009 is the year many claim represents the beginning of Boko Haram’s insurgency (Iacoella and Tirivayi, 2020). The governors of Nigeria were proud to celebrate the death of the group’s leader Muhammad Yusuf, and this celebration was soon found to be “premature”, as Boko Haram became a greater threat than ever in the years to follow with its most recent leader Shekau (Onuoha et al., 2020, p.402). In the years following 2009, Boko Haram remained less prominent, committing small-scale attacks while restructuring its composition and aims. In 2014, Boko Haram gained international attention during the aforementioned kidnappings of Chibok Schoolgirls. It is important to note that there are still girls abducted back in 2014 who remain unfound (Khalid and

Fitzgerald, 2022). The Chibok kidnappings were some of the first cases to receive international attention and were one of the most recognised examples of Boko Haram using schools and education as a form of political leverage (Kenneth and Omusulah, 2016). Following this, 2016 reflects a time of significant restructuring, as it represents, as previously mentioned, the year in which Boko Haram and ISWAP divided and split into two factions (euaa, 2021). This split could represent a step back and a loss in power on both sides during this adaptation period. This period influenced the different intentions and goals of these two groups. The European Union Agency for Asylum Seekers (2021) claims that Boko Haram attacks anyone who does not agree with them or follow their beliefs, no matter their religion. On the other hand, ISWAP focusses its attacks on Christians and those not abiding by Sharia law (euaa, 2021).

In support of the above discussion, when President Buhari claimed that Boko Haram was ‘technically defeated’ in 2016, he meant that the amount of territory used as a base and controlled by Boko Haram had been reduced. In fact, instead of disappearing, Boko Haram moved more towards the northeastern regions of Nigeria and into other Lake Chad countries, including Niger, Chad and Cameroon (Africa Research Bulletin, 2016). Onuoha et al. (2020, p.402) express that although Nigeria and the Lake Chad countries have further funded their military operations to conquer Boko Haram, the insurgency is “far from being degraded”. They dispute the government’s statement that Boko Haram has been ‘technically defeated’ by claiming that it was a poor choice of words and leaves much discussion to be held. Since the beginning of the insurgency, many have lost trust in the government and its efficiency. Leaving whether Boko Haram has been defeated up to interpretation does not allow for the bolstering of this trust. Onuoha et al. (2020) describe that the State continuously increased military funding for the supposed purpose of tackling Boko Haram. However, even with the increase in funds, it has not proved successful. Agbiboa (2013, p.11) declared: “While the arrest of major Boko Haram leaders and strategists has the potential to significantly weaken its operational capability to mount attacks, it has not yet resulted in the destruction of the group's capabilities”. Onuoha et al. (2020) also reviewed the theory that State militants have been found to be feeling demotivated and vulnerable to recruitment by Boko Haram.



This would further divide the military and discredit their common goal against Boko Haram, making them less efficient in their work.

### ***1.1.2 Failed Initiatives***

Verjee and Kwaja (2021) note, in support of Oweoko (2017), that President Buhari has recognised most attacks as aimed at embarrassing him and the Nigerian government; this could have led him to react differently to them. They argue that the State has only increased security forces at schools due to the growing demand and protests; however, in reality, the people of Nigeria do not trust the authorities who have been unable to prevent attacks. They further argue that the State has not followed through with its commitments to initiatives such as the “Safe Schools Initiative” or the “Safe Schools Declaration” (Verjee and Kwaja, 2021, p.388). These initiatives seem staged, to appear as though active steps were taking place in tackling Boko Haram when, in reality, the State has been incapable of doing this. Verjee and Kwaja (2021, p.390) argue that the Nigerian government has continuously shifted the blame and played the victim in order to avoid the “difficult issues inherent in these realities”. They continue to wonder and discuss why Boko Haram and other insurgent groups remain existent after all the supposed ‘attempts’ to eliminate their presence and threat. Later in this thesis, the role of the State and the public view of them in Nigeria will be discussed. The discussion will use the information provided by some of the interviewees who helped conduct this research.

*“Those who felt they were unjustly treated by the Nigerian State have always rebelled against the State” (Casimir et al., 2014, p.62)*

Casimir et al. (2014) question whether the attack on education is actually an attack on the State as a reaction to marginalisation and poor distribution of resources. They argue that Boko Haram is not only a “religious phenomenon”, but also an event that has resulted from various tensions within the country, including “socio-political, economic and ethnic problems” (Casimir et al., 2014, p.59). These problems reflect some inconsistencies in the governance of the Nigerian State, which at times failed to keep its

promises of change and to support the country from the violations and poverty that remain substantial. This leads to the question of whether the existence of Boko Haram arises from discontent within the country and as a form of pressure for change. Although this argument could be valid, it could not excuse the horrors performed by this militant group and the choice of the focal target being schools.

Casimir et al. (2014) claim that Boko Haram is a threat to the insecurity of lives and property in Nigeria, fuelled by the failure of the government as a cause, and also a contributor to its survival. As what is claimed to be the “fiercest challenge to Nigeria” since 1970, Aghedo and Osumah (2012, p.858) discuss the State's inefficiency in protecting citizens and students in the fight against Boko Haram. They claim that the borders are under-protected and that their surveillance, information gathering, and security measures are “ill-equipped” (Aghedo and Osumah, 2012, p.863). They note that the police are aware that they do not have the capacity to defeat Boko Haram or protect themselves or the population adequately. Aghedo and Osumah (2012) also highlight the fact that all regions of Nigeria have been affected by violence and insurgency at certain moments in time. Many of the problems derive from divides in religion and uprisings, driven by “coercion, repression, and a state security approach” (Aghedo and Osumah, 2012, p.857).

Aghedo and Osumah (2012, p.854) assess the most appropriate methods to conquer a group like Boko Haram, which they describe as “faceless” and, therefore impossible to approach or negotiate via dialogue. They summarise these different methods that could be used in response to Boko Haram: “amnesty, dialogue, increased security operations, monetary compensation for victims, employment generation, poverty alleviation, and checking the influx of illegal aliens” (Aghedo and Osumah, 2012, p.864). They outline within their paper that so far none of these methods have been successful. The most popular choice of the Nigerian government has been “increased security operations”, which has made many in the cities feel safer and more protected from insurgents (Aghedo and Osumah, 2012, p.864). However, the security forces are not always extended to each affected area, and many remain without this protection. Solomon (2012) agreed that the State's counterterrorism attempts have proved to be insufficient

for the protection of everyone, and at times even counterproductive. Aghedo and Osumah (2012) made a comparison between the State's counterterrorism strategies for Boko Haram, and the strategies it used on the militants from the Niger Delta who fought to obtain a fair share of the oil income. Boko Haram's goals are religiously focussed rather than financial; the group aim to change the dynamics in Nigeria and prevent the culture from becoming Westernised. This could be described as a change that cannot be repaired financially and with the use of amnesty, as their imposition of a strict form of Islam would restrict the Nigerian population from fully exercising their rights and freedoms.

Furthermore, Campbell (2020) claims that links are often made or suspected between some Northern Government officials and the funding of Boko Haram. Government officials from the northern regions have been accused of supporting the group's anti-western ideologies. Although none of the connections are clear, Campbell (2020) notes that there are some "sketchy" situations involving these officials and that the media reports have been incomplete. Aghedo and Osumah (2012) pinpoint one particular example of a member of the national assembly in Borno state who was prosecuted for involvement with Boko Haram. This, however, does not mean that all government officials in the northern regions agree, they are primarily working against Boko Haram and not in support. The northern regions of Nigeria are mainly Muslim; these are the regions described as "breeding grounds" for Boko Haram recruitment (Hoechner, 2018, p.57). If the government is not united in the fight against Boko Haram, then it is not surprising that they have not been able to completely tackle the group. Bertoni et al. (2019) expose a divide between the North and the South, which could be the reason why now Boko Haram operates mostly in the North. If Boko Haram now specifically affects a smaller area of Nigeria, this does not mean that the government should reduce its efforts to prevent Boko Haram. They still continuously target innocent people in Nigeria and pose a threat to their everyday lives. The government, according to Aghedo and Osumah (2012), has shifted its power to the South, from Muslims to Christians.

## ***Conclusion***

In conclusion, the Nigerian authorities have introduced various strategies to defeat the terrorist group Boko Haram; however, in many ways, it has failed to respond. More and more Nigerian citizens have lost trust in the State's ability to help protect them and help them obtain jobs or reduce poverty rates. Various associations like UNICEF (2021) and the World Food Programme (2023) are working to support the people of Nigeria through the horrors they are facing. These associations mostly recognise those who feel neglected by the government and who are the most affected victims of terror: the people of the Northeast. While the existence of Boko Haram in Nigeria is discussed, it is important to note that the number of Boko Haram members has declined in some regions; however, in some parts of the country, it is being replaced by other individuals who are angry at the State due to feeling neglected, unemployed, unhealthy, and lacking access to resources (Anka, 2022). The State has played an important role in fuelling the motivations of extremists and should have to implement further measures to care for its people and protect them from the threat of Boko Haram or groups with similar interests. So, in response to the subtitle of this section of the theoretical framework, this literature concludes that the State plays a role in the fight against Boko Haram, they are proving to not have the capacity to eliminate the group, but have tried to implement security measures. The general opinion of the literature shows discontent towards the government and the idea that they have created an environment in which terrorists felt the need to react. Other feelings show that people have not felt sufficiently protected by the State, and have, over time and over different presidents, lost trust in the government's attempts to dismantle terror. The use of security forces has been insufficient to protect those outside of the cities, and no other measures have proven to be effective apart from various negotiations to release some of the kidnapped children, but never all of them, as many remain captive. Due to the help of some civilians and some attempts by the State, many suspected members of Boko Haram have been brought to the authorities and put in prison (Oweoko, 2017). Some Boko Haram members are now locked up, but this did not come without cost and the number of civilians who died in the process of 'catching' these soldiers is significant.

## **1.2 Education as a Sin**

### ***1.2.1 Who are Boko Haram?***

Casimir et al. (2014, p.59) describe the foundation of the term “Boko Haram”, deriving from the phrase meaning “Western education is sin”. The concept of Western education first appeared in Nigeria after British colonisation and the “Christian mission” that arrived on the southwestern coast (Umar, 2019, p.2). The arrival of the British led to the reformulation of policy and the institutional structure in Nigeria; their intentions revolved around achieving European economic benefits and the trade of materials and goods (Falola and Heaton, 2012, p.119). However, they also claimed to be supporting the development of Nigeria, building its economy, offering progress, and advancing civilisation (Falola and Heaton, 2012, p.112). Boko Haram is complex to understand, and Walker (2012, p.9) describes them as an Islamic sect who are angry at the State, seeking revenge, and “bent on attacking Western interests”. Gwadabe et al. (2018, p.46) highlight that the modern “socioeconomic” structure in Nigeria is related to the impact of colonisation. The divides between the population and regions, deriving from the colonisation, leave a sense of reluctance towards Western education and outside influence. Boko Haram prefers Nigerian children to be educated with alternative principles that reflect Islamic standards rather than any connection to the West (HDS, 2023). Casimir et al. (2014, p.61) note that Boko Haram believes that the negative repercussions of underdevelopment in Nigeria are the fault of the authorities and State leaders “who are products of Western education”. This appointment of fault may be one of the leading factors that resulted in the attacks performed on schools like the Chibok case discussed above. Boko Haram has instilled fear and made studying in any educational system that is not approved of by the group a danger. Ayodele (2019, p.17) describes Boko Haram as “a tiny, radicalised minority who uses a warped understanding of the Islamic faith to justify the lethality of their violence against unprotected Nigerians, especially schoolchildren”.

Aghedo and Osumah (2012, p.858) describe the aim of Boko Haram as the “Islamisation of Nigeria”. They express that their name comes from “Western education

is evil” and note that most members of Boko Haram come from the northern Muslim regions and have an Islamic educational background. At the time of this article by Aghedo and Osumah (2012), some of the most significant and destructive attacks on schools had not yet occurred in Nigeria. If the destructive wing of Boko Haram previously only committed attacks on government locations and high-profile buildings, they have now evidently shifted to also attacking schools. At some point in the aforementioned period between 2009 and the attack on a school in Maiduguri in 2012, Boko Haram became more committed than ever to the deterioration of Western education and attacking the State. Walker (2012) claimed that it is unknown where the group went in the period between 2009 and 2010. He notes that they reappeared in the middle of 2010, committing assassinations, bombings, and attacks on churches, markets, and “beyond the original focus of police and other authorities” (Walker, 2012, p.5). In 2011, the group made headlines with an attack on the United Nations building in Abuja (BBC, 2011). Agbiboa (2013) claims that this attack was a big development for Boko Haram. He emphasises that this was an attack which proved that the group had returned; it showed that it was targeting the State and authorities for the murder of Mohammed Yusuf, the ex-leader of Boko Haram. Walker (2012, p.6) developed on the fact that since 2011, at the time of his article, attacks were happening on a weekly basis and had expanded to “setting fire to schools”. He claimed that in March 2012, in Maiduguri, Borno state, 12 schools had been set on fire and nearly “10,000 pupils were forced out of education” (Walker, 2012, p.6). From this year onwards, Higazi (2016, p. 105) describes how many schools were destroyed, particularly in the “Boko Haram-controlled areas”; he foregrounds that most of the schools in these areas closed between 2013 and 2015 due to the terror threat and many have never reopened.

*“Boko Haram portrays a complex identity politics and struggle for political power and resources. Its repudiation of the State's secular identity and abhorrence of Western education and the quest to Islamise the nation are perhaps intended by its sponsors to gain relevance. It is worth noting that religious politics and conflict date back to the foundation of the Nigerian state during colonial administration.”*

(Aghedo and Osumah, 2012, p.862)

In Aghedo & Osumah's (2012) study, their data shows that members of Boko Haram are mostly those who feel marginalised and victimised by social injustice. They describe them as "uneducated, school dropouts, jobless youth, political thugs, and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds" (Aghedo and Osumah, 2012, p.861). It could be argued that they feel angry towards the State and the education system because they have not been able to access the system or thrive within it. Therefore, they turn against education, claiming that the reason is the Western infiltration of knowledge and culture. They believe that Western penetration has created a hierarchy and a group of dominating elites that excludes the North and Muslims (Walker, 2012). This brings the question of whether the motivations are truly religious or whether they join radical Islamists because of their discontent. Within this group, they feel accepted and part of a religious community for which they will fight and for which their violence will be fuelled. Walker (2012, p.2) claims that Boko Haram believes that politics in the North have been "seized by a group of corrupt, false Muslims". Those recruited by Boko Haram are taught to act on the exclusion and frustration they feel to make changes in Nigeria and to promote a future where "a 'pure' Islamic state" is central to the functioning of the nation (Walker, 2012, p.2). Looking back to the first leader of Boko Haram, Mohammed Yusuf, and his initial frustration, Western education and its infiltration into the development of modern Nigeria were his primary concerns (BBC Africa, 2020). His initial feelings are what made Boko Haram what it is today. Since then, its rapid growth and recruitment of youth have become more violent and ignited by frustration. Aghedo & Osumah (2012) claim that the group exists as a reaction to poor economic conditions, bad governance, and Western education. They aim to destroy all that they do not approve of and make their 'pure Islamic' ideologies the predominant Nigerian identity.

Casimir et al. (2014) examine the fact that not only since the existence of Boko Haram but also throughout history in Nigeria, Islam and the West have clashed and agitated one another. Mostly, these clashes have existed between different regions in Nigeria and different communities, languages, and religions. Aghedo and Osumah (2012) describe that Nigeria is divided into three main ethnoreligious groups: the Hausa-Fulani, the Christian Igbo, and the Yoruba. However, the present and most prominent area of

conflict is between Boko Haram and Christianity (Casimir et al., 2014). Woodhead (2011, p.125) claims that religion can help maintain societal coherence and that shared values and goals allow for a “well-functioning” community. This argument exposes why Nigeria may be divided, due to the differing cultural and religious values leaving its society disjointed. If Nigerians do not share the same view or goals, then certain groups are likely to try to dominate the cultural and religious sphere. In doing so, they may act with force and frustration in order to ensure that everyone follows their purpose and vision even if they disapprove. Woodhead (2011, p.127) also argues that religion can be a “symptom and cause of alienation”. The idea of alienation is very present in understanding Boko Haram and the fuel of their exasperation. If members of Boko Haram feel neglected by the State or by the perception of Christian domination, this may ignite their anger and insecurities.

### ***1.2.2 Boko Haram versus Christianity***

The relationship between Boko Haram and Christianity is tense, due to the group’s perception that Christianity follows Western ideologies (Agbiboa, 2013). Anything perceived as pro-Western is also perceived as Boko Haram’s enemy. Agbiboa (2013, p.147) claims that the insurgents believe that the West has imposed Christian domination and a “corrupt” and “illegitimate” government. Walker (2012) noted that Boko Haram members had claimed to be acting in retaliation to the government’s attempts to dismantle the almajiri school system. He further declared that rather than being against all advancement in Nigeria, the group rejects “the elite created by the policy of indirect rule used by the British to colonise Nigeria” (Walker, 2012, p.7). Umar (2019, p.5) contended that the coloniser’s “main purpose of introducing Western education through the establishment of missionary schools was basically to propagate Christianity”. He attested that due to the Northern leaders refusing Western education, the educational gap between the North and the South began to emerge.

Bertoni et al. (2019, p.2) support Umar (2019) and note that the arrival of the British into Nigeria fuelled “uneven development between the North and the South”. Agbiboa (2013, p.151) highlighted “the deep-rooted reality” that the North has suffered more



than the South and that generally Nigerian Muslims are suffering more from uneven development than the Christians. Falola and Heaton (2012) developed on the arrival of the colonisers and the different approaches taken to the North and South. Siollun (2021, p.329) claimed that the southeastern population were initially more “enthusiastic adopters of the British language, religion and educational system” but “paid the price for it”. However, he claimed that the North kept traditional control and power for longer and rejected any British influence. In 1912, “the Colonial Office decided to amalgamate the northern and southern provinces”, but at this point “the two regions were already on very different paths” (Falola and Heaton, 2012, p.116). Peil (1990) supports this and foregrounds that, to begin with, mostly the South had access to Western education, employment, and the idea of succeeding financially based on a European system. Meanwhile, the North continued with Islamic education and took longer to accept the interference of the colonisers and these Western ways of life. HDS (2023) notes that the colonisers’ implementation of mission schools was an effort to fuel Christianity, intellectuality, a new wave of elites, and to “civilise” Nigeria. Siollun (2021, p.329) accuses Christianity and Western education of “stunting the progress and replacing indigenous systems of education”. The new British governing structures began taking over schools in the South in the 1960s and 1970s and removed their religious association in order to improve integration (Peil, 1990). However, researchers at Harvard Divinity School (2023) claim that the British influenced the rise of Christianity in the South and prompted conversion to Christianity, which began to work from 1860 onwards. The connection between Christianity, the British, and the Nigerian State, outlines the roots of Christian schools and the reason why Boko Haram disapprove of them, due to their derivation from Western influence. Peil (1990, p.313) emphasises this link between Christianity and Western education and the State, as originally Christian missions financed this form of education and then over time the State began to fund it. Between the years 1937-1985, the number of children in primary schools in Nigeria rose from 238,879 to 13,372,446 (Peil, 1990, p.315). Peil (1990) claimed that at that point in time around 1990, Nigeria was able to afford to let education grow and would have been impacted politically if they had not done so.

### *1.2.3 Education as the Target*

The State becomes divided into a situation where themselves and education are being attacked. In addition to protecting children, their futures, and their development, they also have a duty to ensure that each child enjoys their right to education (Irabor, 2022). If the attack by Boko Haram is on education in Nigeria, then it is subsequently on the State, as the provider and bearer of the duty to provide education. Irabor (2022) argues that in the universal declaration, the right to education does not include Islamic education. Therefore, by complying with Boko Haram and their desired education, the Nigerian government would not be respecting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Irabor (2022) argues that the State needs to understand where the perspectives of Boko Haram are formed and from where their anger is derived. If the State shifts towards a broader future that collaborates with what Boko Haram expects, then the future could hold less violence. However, it could be argued that Boko Haram does not seek to accept intercultural education that covers both Islamic and Western education; they appear to only allow specific Islamic education, ideologies, and ways of life. From what is understood, Boko Haram is not looking to negotiate and only approaches opposition to its beliefs with violence and terror.

Kenneth and Omusula (2016, p.189) describe the various ways in which schools are used to target the State. They claim that schools are “instruments of the State and often used as political leverage to achieve political goals”. However, it is unclear where the deep-rooted sentiments lie; Boko Haram tends to be fuelled by the sight of Christians as the “wealthy elite” and the northern regions as those struggling from poverty and neglect (Forest, 2012, p. 56). Innocent pupils and teachers become at risk due to the political connection between education and the State. Attacking schools is seen by some militant groups as an effective form of retaliation against State actions and repression (Kenneth and Omusula, 2016). Why are schools perceived as political instruments in the eyes of armed groups such as Boko Haram? Attacking schools is a way of breaking down the political institution and the work of the government. In the case of Boko Haram, they see children being educated in a way that does not achieve their “pure Islamic future under Sharia law” (Walker, 2012, p.2). But what about the consequences

of this and the lives of the young population that are affected? Boko Haram is not preoccupied with the impact it has on young people and instead exploits and abuses them. The group is described as one of the most “active actors in school-directed violence” (Kenneth and Omusula, 2016, p.190). Ayodele (2019) agrees that Boko Haram follows a trend of terror against schoolchildren and that more needs to be done to offer them protection and provide counter-terrorism education to those around them.

Raghavan (2013) argues that Boko Haram targets schools when they do not approve of the topics being taught. They make no reference to using schools as a political leverage or tool, but rather to stop Western education and non-Islamic teaching. This article was published in 2013 just before the most recognised case of abductions at the Chibok school took place. It is possible that since the writing of this article, Boko Haram has increased its attack on the State through schools, rather than its attack solely on education. Raghavan (2013) claims that even in 2013, schools were closing at noon and holding their exams in private locations protected by the military and security forces. This is agreed on by Higazi (2016), who, as mentioned above, noted that most schools in Boko Haram-controlled areas have never reopened. This enforces an idea of anxiety and dread, associating one's education with the fear of being hurt or attacked by Boko Haram. In 2013, Raghavan (2013) attested that Islamic schools remained more or less at ease and able to open at regular hours; however, over time, all schools have become threatened, even if less so because of their Islamic nature. Youth development has been significantly affected as Boko Haram has instilled fear in the population and has made qualified teachers feel afraid to do their job; the desire to teach now comes ‘at a cost’. Many teachers after 2013 decided not to return, some were substituted by less qualified trainees, and others were just not replaced (Raghavan, 2013, p.3). Irabor (2022) emphasises the importance of teachers and their knowledge; he notes that their knowledge contributes to the development of the child and their willingness to learn. If teachers decide not to return or are substituted by less qualified teachers, this may negatively impact the development of children and the transmission of education.

The lack of teachers has left many children less able to attain and achieve their educational goals, many cannot attend school due to the lack of resources and school

capacity. Raghavan (2013) claims that some of the schools that were burnt to the ground had already been practically empty, with no desks, textbooks, or basic educational resources. How are future generations in Nigeria going to be able to succeed in a world where they have not received an education and cannot even attend school if they would like because of the terrorist threat? Peil (1990) outlines the importance of a parent's education on their children and the passing on of knowledge. If generations of children since the beginning of the Boko Haram insurgency have been prevented from having a full education, then this impact will likely pass on to the generations to come. Furthermore, whilst Boko Haram still exists, this threat and fear continues to grow and travel between generations. The colonists attempted to restructure Nigeria and break some of the traditional school systems, including Islamic institutions that were previously funded by “the giving of alms” from the community, parents, and the Emirate system (Adamu, 2019). The colonisation of countries in Africa according to Peil (1990) has led to a lack of job opportunities and a prevalence of illiteracy among younger generations. She declares that this was due to the colonists implementing employment policies that restricted Africans, who had been educated by the precolonial system, from accessing opportunities. The State believed in fuelling the new education system; in the South, Igbo parents wanted their children to excel in school, whereas, in the northern Hausa regions, parents often did not see the benefit of schooling (Peil, 1990, p.321).

### ***Conclusion***

In conclusion, this section, Education as a Sin, outlined who Boko Haram are and what their intentions are. It demonstrated what the meaning of their name translates to and showed that the group is not always coherent and logical in its strategy. This literature has discussed whether Boko Haram is aiming to attack schools or the State and whether or not schools are used as political leverage. It considers that schools are attacked as institutions connected to the State, but also because of the disapproval of Western education. The discussion on the decrease in attendance in schools, the number of teachers who have stopped teaching, and the number of students who have had to leave school early or are too afraid to go at all, was initiated. The derivation of Boko Haram's

anger is still not fully understood by the State, it is not protecting children and their education. This section also mentions the origins of Western education and its initial connection to Christianity; this connection was slowly removed as the State attempted to make the Westernised form of education more neutral. Western education significantly increased the number of children going to school and the prospects for children and development in Nigeria. This has changed since the surge of attacks on schools. Nigeria should have the opportunity to return to safe and efficient schooling. The children of Nigeria deserve to feel safe and enjoy their right to education without outside threats.

### **1.3 Education at a Cost**

As seen, Boko Haram has caused the closure of many schools in the northeast of Nigeria. Either children go to school with the risk of being attacked or terrorised by groups who disapprove of Western education, or they damage their future by not completing their studies (Casimir et al., 2014). Although Boko Haram has been pushed from the southern regions of Nigeria, they are still prominent in the North and continue to target schools that do not adhere to its beliefs.

#### ***1.3.1 Security and Militarisation***

Verjee and Kwala (2021) discuss how attending school means accepting being surrounded by militants and security forces on a regular basis. The normalisation of arms and soldiers could come at a cost to children in Nigeria and fuel more acceptance of weapons and violence. It also implies a need to be conscious that a terror attack could be attempted at any time. Mentioned above were initiatives, like the “Safe Schools Initiative”, put in place by the State for schools, due to the scrutiny they faced and the need for them to take some responsibility (Verjee and Kwaja, 2021, p.388). It feels important to assess what the presence of these security forces might be doing to the children’s psychology. Verjee and Kwala (2021) discuss that most Nigerians do not trust the State. Therefore, they question whether the population believes that the security presence at schools is keeping the children safe or is there for alternative motives. Many

feel that the military is corrupted due to the quantity of funding designated to them and the lack of return seen from this (Oluoha et al., 2020). It is important to question whether security forces have increased or decreased the number of students in schools since the beginning of the insurgency. Verjee and Kwaja (2021, p.389) claim that the State often uses the security forces in schools as an excuse for why they have not managed to tackle Boko Haram completely; they say that the army is “overstretched”. In support of this, Walker (2012, p.12) claims that attempts from the government to protect the population from Boko Haram with security forces have been “consistently brutal and counterproductive”. Casimir et al. (2014) express that it is not only in schools but also in the streets that people have had to become used to high military and police presence.

Ogechi (2018) discusses the effect of displacement on education and the psychological impact that conflict and this movement can have. He pinpoints the fact that once children leave their education due to displacement, they may be traumatised by the conflict and what they have witnessed, and will often drop out of education and the pursuit of their dreams. Ogechi (2018) studies the correlation between the trauma left by Boko Haram and the psychological problems that follow, affecting the minds of young people. He notes that by attending school at risk of being attacked or kidnapped, children put their mental health in jeopardy. Although the best option for their life prospects may be to continue their studies, the fear of the insurgents returning could make this psychologically challenging. However, this is what Boko Haram want to do; they want to instil fear and prevent children from studying the forms of education that they disapprove of (Raghavan, 2013).

### ***1.3.2 Balancing Education***

Cocks (2014, p.30) describes how one of the State's responses was to make education in Nigeria more “Islamic friendly” with the aim of reducing Boko Haram’s focus on schools. He detailed that although the idea was to eliminate the evidence of Western ideas in the education system, the State still encouraged students to pursue extracurricular studies and stay up to date with the subjects not included in schools.

Irabor (2022) argues that this is what Boko Haram desires, to replace Western education with Islamic education. However, Casimir et al. (2014, p.63) note that Boko Haram teaches “the wrong version of Islam”. They claim that contrary to the Muslim belief that one cannot force others to become Muslim, Boko Haram kidnap, sometimes kill, or force Christians to convert to Islam. Still, in 2021, the secretary of the “Northern Elders Forum of Nigeria” said that Boko Haram was winning in taking down Western education (Irabor, 2022, p.69). This is because as previously mentioned, although the fight against Boko Haram has somewhat calmed down in many regions, the northeastern regions remain significantly impacted. Many schools in these northern regions are closed indefinitely (Irabor, 2022). Schools that are not closed continue to be under threat of terror and kidnapping. Zimmerman and Woolf (2014) support the idea that whether children follow an Islamic or Western education, as long as they receive an education, they are more likely to be employed and less likely to sway towards crime like joining Boko Haram. This may be disputed when looking back to the beginning of Boko Haram and the influence that Mohammed Yusuf had over many Islamic institutions, drawing them in to support his fight (Kenneth and Omusula, 2016). Therefore, it is important to ask how to decide on an educational system in Nigeria that is agreed on by all but not corrupted or negatively influenced by a hidden power. It is also important to note that with Boko Haram it is unclear what they desire and although their hatred appears to target Western education, they still attack both Muslims and Christians (Casimir et al., 2014).

Not only can education be at a cost or under threat due to Boko Haram, but also Hoechner (2018) describes modern or Western education as harder for poorer communities to access in Nigeria. Peil (1990) notes that many Muslim families in Western African countries do not see the benefits of Western education. It is not simply about learning English for these children, but they see colleagues of their own age attending modern schools, better-funded schools, schools where they teach English and a wider range of skills. There is a divide between those able to attend these modern schools and those who cannot in terms of class and economic status (Hoechner, 2018, p.69). Bertoni et al. (2019) outline the fact that the northeast of Nigeria has the lowest levels of literacy. Hoechner (2018, p.91) expresses that young Muslims labelled

“almajiris” often feel excluded from “modern knowledge”; however, they are also taught to be suspicious of these teachings. She continues by assessing the fact that almajiri children are children who are sent away by their parents to Islamic Institutions, to live and learn the Qu’ran, and to become respectful and knowledgeable Muslims.

Hoechner (2018) emphasises the fact that almajiri children often desire secular and modern knowledge, but that it is often unaffordable to them. She declares that almajiris believe that “secular schooling is the schooling of the rich” and that they are not offered the same opportunities (Hoechner, 2018, p.69). This is an example of how the existing divides between religions and classes in Nigeria may be affecting children’s education. Taiwo (2013) agrees that accessing basic education comes at a cost and that only rich families can afford to put their children in school. Therefore, he claims the poorer families are the ones who suffer from negligence by the government. If almajiris believe that government or secular schools offer more opportunities that are inaccessible to them, they will feel neglected and unfairly treated. Taiwo (2013, p.248) discusses the creation of a “modern almajiri school system”, whereby the children are helped off the streets, and the usual educational structure is broadened in a way that allows the children to thrive. This would be a system that incorporates parts of the Westernised system, providing the children with “essential skills” (Taiwo, 2013, p 248).

### ***1.3.3 Frustration and Recruitment***

Islamic educational institutions have been accused of fuelling anger and suspicious feelings among young Muslims (Hoechner, 2018). Hoechner (2018) claims that many young Muslims are circulated by myths that affect their education and welfare. The almajiris schools are described as “breeding grounds” for terrorists and as lacking the resources to allow children to become “functional members of society” (Hoechner, 2018, p.203-204). Aghedo and Osumah (2012, p.861) agree with Hoechner (2018) that due to the high poverty rates, affecting employment levels and development capacity, many almajiris in the north of Nigeria are described as “fertile soil”. They claim that the reason these children are vulnerable to Boko Haram recruitment is that they are struggling, begging in the streets, and feeling neglected by the State. Almajiris are made



to feel like they are heading in the wrong direction and are bound to end up either in severe poverty or as victims of indoctrination. Hoechner (2018) describes that this association needs to be cut off and that a more positive and sustainable approach to almajiris needs to be formed. It may be that if their schools become more positively viewed, and if Islamic education is not so disapproved of, they may feel less victimised and perhaps their religion can be disassociated from the extremist and radical Islamic views of Boko Haram.

Onuoha (2011, p.137) claimed that Boko Haram members are “disaffected youths, unemployed graduates and former almajiris”. Casimir et al. (2014, p. 62) agree that the recruits of the insurgents are mostly the almajiri children who were unable to have Western education and instead have spent their childhoods hawking and begging for their Mallams. Last (2020) states that following independence and the pressure placed on Mohammed Yusuf by the Government, he called upon his students who had also been teaching themselves to younger generations of almajiris. This rounding up of young students was one of the first groups to be fuelled by Mohammed Yusuf and his plea for help (Last, 2020). Onuoha (2011, p.137) describes the almajiri children as living in “appalling conditions” and as susceptible to recruitment due to a lack of parental care and stability. Last (2020, p.227) argues that despite most of their parents strongly disapproving of joining extremist groups, young almajiris are motivated by an attraction to “adrenaline-fuelled” violence. Although these young boys were not originally angry radicals, some become radicalised and used by Boko Haram. Last (2020) looks at the culture in northern Nigeria and the importance of respect, justice, and recognition of values. He outlines the values which children in Nigeria are taught to stand for, patience, kindness, lack of violence, and prioritisation of hard work. The only focal characteristic that he relates to perhaps a desire for vengeance is humiliation and injustice. If a son goes against his father, he is considered a humiliation to the family and may be rejected and kicked out of their home. Last (2020) further declares that these sons then have to take responsibility for their own lives and often take this as an opportunity to rebel and join groups of migrant youth. He says that this is where they may seek an alternative path or turn to radical Islam. Last (2020, p.324) argues that this is the main reason for radicalisation: a “breakdown of relations between a son and his

father". He asserts that it is when they begin to seek new protection and a way to build their future that they join groups, follow a preacher, or search for a purpose.

These groups of youth act against their fathers and the political elite; they turn to violence and criminal activity (Last, 2020). However, Last (2020) shifts the blame from the parents and rather towards the friends that the boys make once they have left home and have chosen to associate themselves with the wrong crowds. He notes that this is where Boko Haram seems convincing and appears as a global and modern option; they offer a new life, one they claim is accepted by Allah. Last (2020) expresses that the departure of young boys from their homes does not always result in recruitment by groups like Boko Haram. If the values that they were taught from an early age remain their focus, they will be reluctant to join violent surroundings. However, Last (2020) argues that if they can put aside their disapproval of violence, they become the perfect candidate for recruitment. Looking at a study on child development in the context of terrorism by Masten and Narayan (2012), biological, behavioural, and external factors that can lead to changes in a child's life choices, social behaviour, and educational attainment are observed. These choices may change depending on the way a child is raised, whom they are surrounded by, or the trauma they have experienced. Masten and Narayan (2012) demonstrate a connection between the way a child is raised, the presence of a caregiver who is supportive, and the behaviour that the child will grow to have. They claim that the various things that children are exposed to during their childhood can play a role in their future and who they become. In addition to this, the education to which a child has access will affect their view of life. Last (2020) finds that education does not always mean all that is learnt in schools, but also cultural and familial education taught at home or from where one is raised. Values and culture are important players in defining whom someone will become later in life. Last (2020) notes that in Hausa culture, strong values and hatred of violence are promoted, however, these are being destroyed or disillusioned by militant groups. Education is an essential part of childhood; if children are rejected by their homes, then they need to be guided towards neutral and safe education systems rather than exposed to recruitment by terrorists.

In a parallel study to Last, Irabor (2022, p.69) argues that the main reason for Boko Haram's behaviour and success in recruitment is "frustration". For boys who left their homes in poorer communities and are struggling to access jobs and opportunities, they are frustrated at the State and their view of the State's failure to provide necessities and protect them. If the life of the boys who left home affected them emotionally and resulted in many struggles, they may be looking for a way to act out and release their frustration. If the State at this moment fails to support these young people and guide them towards protection and education, then they may be more likely to turn to violence. Irabor (2022) expands on the importance of education and what it can help achieve in terms of future employability. He also expresses how vital education is for teaching morals and behaviours. Similarly, to the values learnt within a Nigerian household, the values taught in schools are also crucial to determining who the children will become and what opportunities they will be able to access. Returning to Peil (1990), she highlights the advantages that having educated parents can have on the child. She touches on the fact that although most parents want to offer their children the best opportunities possible, the cost of education can be an obstacle. Irabor (2022) declares that education enables people to learn outside of their culture but also to feel and maintain their culture because of self-desire rather than influence.

Aghedo and Osumah (2012, p.856) argue that due to the frustration and anger of the youth and the Nigerian population, the State continues to replace themselves and their power with their family members, friends, or associates. This is rather than allowing what they describe as the "hopeless" youth to come into power. Considering the State's lack of success in improving neutrality, providing education, and conquering Boko Haram, the impossibility of bringing someone new into power and allowing them to make changes poses problems. It also fuels demotivation in young people and affects their ability to help in the improvement and development of the country. Peil (1990, p.323) found that in Nigeria, many believe that education is only useful for obtaining a better wage and employment; she claims that "a lack of opportunities may dim enthusiasm for secondary schooling". If they can succeed at school but are not offered opportunities after, they may feel demoralised. These feelings could be what motivates some youth to "embrace criminality" and terrorism (Aghedo & Osumah, 2012, p.856).

## ***Conclusion***

To conclude, this section on 'Education at a Cost' describes the various factors that prevent children from fully enjoying their education. By continuing their studies during the time of insurgency, children are at risk of being attacked, kidnapped, or traumatised. Insurgent groups like Boko Haram make children frightened to go to school, and teachers afraid to attend. The State has introduced security measures and forces at various schools, but this has been criticised for fuelling the normalisation of arms and weapons. Some of the population do not trust the Nigerian State and therefore do not have faith in the intentions of the government's initiatives. Children who have witnessed acts of terror may suffer from psychological impact, which affects their studies and future achievements. More support should be given to these children by specialised therapists and psychologists. This section goes on to briefly discuss the almajiri children and their negative associations with Boko Haram. It assesses the various ways in which familial, social, and educational opportunities impact the behaviour of a child and the person they become. The literature discusses associations between vulnerability to recruitment and almajiri children; it also forms a link between poverty and feelings of neglect and between education and employment. It brushes upon the idea that employment is offered to those who have connections and wealth rather than those who feel segregated or those who struggle to access education.

## **RELEVANCE TODAY in 2023**

The northern regions of Nigeria suffer from the highest rates of poverty and insecurity; they are the most populous but are victimised by the political and economic structure of the State (Jaiyeola, 2020). Boko Haram is still very prominent in the BAY regions of Nigeria, while other groups and individuals claiming to differ from Boko Haram, who are also angry at the State are committing similar attacks in other regions of Nigeria. Their motives tend to derive from their struggles, unemployment, starvation, financial limitations, etc. In the Northwest, groups are referred to as "bandits" and consist of many different "unaffiliated groups" without unity (Anka, 2022). Although they have not reached the same amount of threat as Boko Haram, they are instilling fear into

communities, causing trauma and destabilisation. Many cases of abductions still occur by these individuals, usually as a way to obtain money for ransom or as a mechanism to gain visibility. Anka (2022) outlines that the bandits have different goals from Boko Haram and are not yet as influential or deadly. He claims that the bandits “are ethnic Fulani and have symptoms originating from perceived marginalisation in a state of predominantly Hausa people”.

The aim of this theoretical framework is to emphasise the idea that although Boko Haram is often described as having decreased in prominence, they are still very much present and relevant in the research field. Ayodele (2022) highlights the fact that Boko Haram has scared international investors from coming to Nigeria, and the local economy has suffered tremendously due to the impact of the insurgency. Casimir et al. (2014, p.64) agree that foreign investment has suffered due to the prevalence of Boko Haram and insecurity. They claim that the investors that exist in the country have moved their interests further south. It is important to assess how the State has responded to terror in the past and what needs to change for it to eliminate the terror threats once and for all. It is also vital to focus on the children and families who remain significantly affected by the impact of these crimes committed by Boko Haram and other extremist individuals. Many children remain psychologically affected and need support to return to their studies in a healthy way. These acts of terror are leaving families broken, children homeless, and schools abandoned. It is essential that the State reacts effectively to restructure the country, the economy, employment, education, and housing. People need support and are left to rebuild their communities, their families, and their emotions, alone, without enough help.

## CHAPTER 2 - DATA AND LAW

OCHA (2022) outlined that the northeastern BAY states remain in an intense state of need due to the displacement of people caused by insecurity and devastation. Attacks continue to take place by what OCHA (2022, p.6) defines as “non-state armed groups”. In the BAY regions alone, 8.4 million people are in need, 58% of which are children (OCHA, 2022). Not only are displaced people finding themselves in camps where many of their basic needs are not being met, but they are also finding themselves unrecognised by the State. Looking at the various factors that affect people in the northeastern regions, a qualitative analysis was performed for the Humanitarian Needs Overview of Nigeria (OCHA, 2022). It found that the top priority needs for people struggling in Nigeria were “food (93%), livelihoods and income generation (68%), and healthcare (41%)” (OCHA, 2022, p.7). It is evident here that food insecurity is the predominant issue, and this leads to other problems in terms of healthcare and illnesses resulting from a lack of food. In the BAY regions, cholera outbreaks are regular, resulting from food insecurity and also as a result of homelessness and a lack of water, hygiene, and sanitation (OCHA, 2022).

Since the beginning of the insurgency, Boko Haram has occupied many areas in northeastern Nigeria. This has meant that thousands of schools and State institutions were placed under control, attacked, and mostly destroyed for being infidel and not complying with the extremist’s standards (Higazi, 2016). In the BAY states, between 2012 and 2015, nearly 300 schools and other training facilities were attacked, killing hundreds of students and teachers, and restricting the education of around 300,000 students in Adamawa state alone (Higazi, 2016). Evoh (2016) confirms that Adamawa state has the highest number of IDPs, meaning high numbers of displaced children who have had their studies disrupted. In relation to the destruction of schools and the displacement of children in the BAY regions, this chapter will analyse various legal obligations and duties of the Nigerian government to protect its children. In doing so, it becomes possible to evaluate whether the State is complying with these obligations and whether the children are enjoying their rights in accordance with national legal standards. This section highlights various articles of the Child’s Rights Act and

demonstrates which are not being respected by the government of Nigeria. It demonstrates this with the use of data from quantitative sources and develops on it with the help of scholars from the theoretical framework. It selects articles relevant to this research project and children in the BAY regions of Nigeria and should not be considered to include all articles that are violated in the wider context of northeastern Nigeria. It is important to note that due to insurgency, climate crises, cholera outbreaks, unemployment, and more, the Nigerian government faces many challenges and it seems impossible to fix everything. However, many of the problems are the creators of other problems, and more dialogue must be established between government authorities and the leaders of Nigerian communities.

## **2.1 Child's Rights Act**

Nigeria defines a 'child' as anyone under the age of 18; this was established in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 1999 (Chioma, 2022). The Constitution outlines the rights of people of all ages in Nigeria, including the right to life, the right to privacy, the right to freedom of expression and the right to freedom from discrimination (Chioma, 2022). It begins by highlighting the basic rights of children; which was later reinforced by the Child's Rights Act implemented in Nigeria in 2003 (Chioma, 2022). The National Human Rights Commission (2023) noted that only 24 of the 36 states in Nigeria adopted the Child's Right Act within their state law. However, when trying to find out which states have, in fact, domesticated this act, the results are unclear and give inconsistent answers. Kabir (2022) said that still 19 years after the adoption of the Child's Rights Act, the Northeast is lagging behind. He claimed that Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states have still not domesticated it. One of the main goals of this act was to provide protection and care for each child as a necessary part of their health and well-being (Chioma, 2022). Within the act, there is a reference to crimes against children that should result in punishment. For example, punishment for child trafficking, child marriage, exploitative labour, abduction, recruitment into the armed forces, etc (Law Nigerian Admin, 2018). Looking back at the previous sentence and comparing it to what has been mentioned in the literature review, it can be seen that many of these criminal activities are taking place and little is being done to punish,

prevent, and eliminate them. It can also be noted that children, in particular, are severely impacted and victimised by the insurgents, their safety has been threatened and their lives have been changed. During the interviews discussed in Chapter 3 of this research project, the candidates will give insight into what is actually happening on the ground in Nigeria, which groups of children are most affected, and how the Nigerian government is failing to protect its children and citizens effectively.

Below are various articles of the Child's Rights Act, followed by data showing that the Nigerian government does not comply with the articles. This aims to outline the duty and highlight the violation.

### ***2.1.1 Protection, Care, Survival and Development***

*“Article 2 - A child to be given the protection and care necessary for his well-being.*

*Article 4: Right to survival and development.”*

(Law Nigerian Admin, 2018)

Within the OCHA (2022) study, it is noted that children and women in the Northeast are under-protected and have often been subjected to displacement, violence, and safety threats. In fact, the study shows that 81% of those in need in Nigeria are women or children. A high proportion of those in need have been displaced due to the insurgency and now live in IDP camps where there are health and protection concerns (OCHA, 2022). During the covid-19 pandemic, from January to June 2020, the Child Protection Sub-Sector (CPSS) (2020) targetted 1.07 million children in the BAY regions to offer child protection services. They managed to reach only 25% of that number with psychological and mental support, support for unaccompanied and unprotected children, and reintegration projects. These data highlight the number of children who suffered during the 2020 pandemic. CPSS (2020) also offered support to more than 60 thousand caregivers, with the aim of helping children in difficult situations. The aftermath of the covid-19 pandemic has further caused and resulted in significant challenges for people in the BAY regions. The number of children who suffer remains high and children are



not adequately protected and cared for, which is impacting their right to survival and development.

As highlighted during the theoretical framework, Hoechner (2018) outlined that many of the almajiri children remain without shelter due to the lack of capacity and space for them to live with their Mallams in the Quranic schools. She notes that often in urban areas, almajiri children do not have access to food or soap and live with a lack of hygiene, highly exposed to health risks (Hoechner, 2018, p.3). In these circumstances, the children are limited from developing and struggling to survive, they do not have protection from their schools, parents, or the State, and have to fend for themselves. When discussing schoolchildren, Ayodele (2019) claims that strategies need to be implemented due to the lack of protection for them. He says that stakeholders should help local communities implement strategies and initiatives that improve security in schools and for children. He also emphasised the need for policymakers and the State to get involved in protecting children and their education. So far, the State has been unable to provide for the number of almajiri children who are struggling to survive. This has been demonstrated by their failed attempts to ban the almajiri system or send almajiri children back home to their families (UNICEF, 2020). CPSS (2020) in northeast Nigeria noted that during the covid-19 pandemic, the government's decision to ban the almajiri system meant that many children were relocated, and their health and protection were put at risk. They further emphasised the fact that the movement of these children highlighted the number of them who need protection and do not have parental care. These children without parental care, who were sent off to the almajiri system, have been put at risk and are not enjoying their basic rights.

### ***2.1.2 Parental Care, Protection, and Maintenance***

*“Article 14: Right to parental care, protection and maintenance”*

(Law Nigerian Admin, 2018)

UNICEF (2017) conducted research that showed that 84.9% of children in Nigeria have experienced physical punishment or psychological aggression by their caregivers.

UNICEF (2017) uses the definitions from the MICS (Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys) programme, which differentiates physical punishment from psychological aggression and the impact that they have. They define the “caregiver” as any of the “adult household members with caregiving responsibilities for the child”. They outlined that the violence experienced by children is most often at home and as a way of punishing “unwanted behaviour”. UNICEF (2017) studied the fact that although violence, physical force, and verbal intimidation are common, they have a severe psychological impact on children and the behaviour they carry into adulthood. Seen in the theoretical review, Last (2020) analysed the differences in Nigerian culture in terms of the way children are raised and the way that poverty impacts this. He notes the relationship between some fathers and sons and the neglect felt by many of the male youth in the north of Nigeria. This neglect has a potentially adverse effect on the actions of the sons in the future.

Furthermore, the right to parental care becomes a complication in situations where parents have been killed or taken by insurgents. The quantity of children without parents on the streets in the northeastern regions is not being sufficiently confronted. OCHA (2022, p.123) note that one in every fifty children has been “separated from their families due to the conflict”, and many have not been able to find their families due to the situation being managed poorly and a lack of resources to deal with each child’s individual case. Masten and Narayan (2012) discuss the different ways that trauma and terrorism impact children through direct and indirect pathways. Direct pathways include the physical effects felt by the children who are in danger, starving, subjected to torture, or whose parents or caregivers have been physically impacted (Masten and Narayan, 2012). The indirect pathways are more about the psychological impacts on children after they and their caregivers have been threatened (Masten and Narayan, 2012). They note that indirect pathways also include the decrease in the quality of care that caregivers can provide to a child who has been subjected to trauma and suffering due to the mental pressure imposed on them.

During times of conflict and trauma, the pressure on caregivers to protect their families and themselves increases, physically and mentally. The caregivers need to support the

children through post-trauma situations and also the threat to their lives. This is a challenge that no one can prepare for, and becomes more complicated when caregivers are killed or taken during terrorist attacks, leaving children to have to fend for themselves. Masten and Narayan (2012, p.23) develop further by emphasising the importance of “supportive and effective caregiving”; they claim that the role of caregivers and adults in a child’s life can help them become more resilient and aware of the risk. The parental role in helping a child develop their behaviour, motivation, and problem-solving skills is crucial (Masten and Narayan, 2012). During the covid-19 pandemic, the CPSS (2020) noticed that the isolation and quarantine of caregivers was an important issue. This absence of parents leads to the risk of the children directing themselves towards negative behaviour. While caregivers had to isolate themselves, children were neglected and did not have access to basic necessities because their parents could not provide for them.

### ***2.1.3 Right to Education***

*“Article 15: Right to free, compulsory and universal primary education - every child has the right to free, compulsory education and universal basic education and it shall be the duty of the government in Nigeria to provide such education.”*

(Law Nigerian Admin, 2018)

Bertoni et al. (2019) found that Nigeria is responsible for 10% of the children not in school globally. Human Rights Watch (2021) claimed that before the covid-19 pandemic, around 10.5 million children did not attend school even though schools are meant to be free and compulsory. Article 15 is evidently not being complied with, as thousands of children are not enjoying their right to education. Hoechner (2018, p.48) described that almajiri children who cannot access Western schools are often deprived of food, and hygiene and are “particularly vulnerable”. Since the insurgency, many children, particularly schoolgirls, have feared going to school as a result of psychological trauma from events that have occurred within their communities and also at their schools (OCHA, 2022). Many of these traumatic and destructive events were caused by terrorists, including Boko Haram and other Non-State Armed Groups

(NSAGs) (OCHA, 2022, p.06). Irabor (2022) confirms that in the Northeast, children do not enjoy their right to education due to Boko Haram and the lack of government support.

According to the Overview of Humanitarian Needs (OCHA, 2022), the education of many children in the northeast of Nigeria has suffered due to the continuing state of crisis. Displacement and the lack of resources to fund education have forced many families to concentrate on the basic necessities rather than the studies and educational attainment of their children. This not only prevented children of preschool age from ever attending school, but it has also contributed to higher dropout rates (OCHA, 2022). The data show that 56% of displaced children in the BAY states do not go to school (OCHA, 2022). It is important to note that contributing to this deterioration of displaced children's studies is also gender-specific suffering. With the religious nature of Boko Haram and its most popular methods of terrorising the Northeast, it has become increasingly dangerous for girls to attend school. Girls are often subjected to early marriage, kidnappings, or sexual assault by Boko Haram and other groups of soldiers (OCHA, 2022). However, Boko Haram is not the only perpetrator causing displacement, and in fact, the number of those affected by Boko Haram has decreased over the past years; other perpetrators and individuals that resemble this group are committing similar crimes (OCHA, 2022). OCHA (2022) shows that although Boko Haram is less visible, the number of unaccompanied children due to NSAGs' abductions and forced recruitment seems to remain high, and many lack the support they need. Without knowledge and education, their future achievement and quality of life are likely to be at a disadvantage.

Statistics show that in 2019 there was an insufficient number of classrooms in Nigeria for the total amount of children needing education (Statista, 2019). Specifically, in primary schools, the national enrolment rate was only 68.3% and the number of classrooms to support this rate was too low by around 230 rooms (Statista, 2019). This leads to overcrowding in classrooms and less focus on the individual needs of a child. The lack of schools and classrooms was also caused by the rise of insurgents and the fear they instilled in teachers and students (Higazi, 2016). Many primary schools in

rural areas of northeast Nigeria are now abandoned or destroyed and cannot be returned to or reused (Higazi, 2016). Kabir (2022) notes that Article 15 is being violated in the northeast of Nigeria as they have the worst rates of out-of-school children. Ayodele (2019) highlights the fact that during times of displacement due to terrorist attacks and destruction caused by the insurgency, some schools have had to be used as shelters and IDP camps in Adamawa. This has restricted children from enjoying their right to education for long periods. Ayodele (2019) highlights the fact that interruptions in a child's education have significant effects on the child's future and success in school. During displacement and the effects of armed conflict, the right to compulsory education is not fully enjoyed.

Linked to complying with Article 15 of the Child's Right Act is the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria Act (TRCN, 2023). This act determines the standards of knowledge and skill that a teacher is required to have in order to be qualified. These standards are outlined by the Teachers Registration Council (TRCN, 2023). OCHA (2022) claimed that only 29% of the schools in the BAY regions of Nigeria have teachers who have acquired the minimum level of teaching qualifications. During the rise of insurgent attacks, teachers have been killed or have fled due to the fear of being targeted; they have been "among the displaced people" (OCHA, 2022, p.23). Therefore, in many schools that are trying to remain open in the Northeast, there is a lack of available resources and teachers. Many teachers who help by substituting during this process are not qualified (OCHA, 2022, p.103), this means that children are not obtaining the appropriate standards of education and teaching.

#### ***2.1.4 Child Marriage and Betrothal***

*"Article 21: Prohibition of Child Marriage;*

*Article 22: Prohibition of Child Betrothal;*

*Article 23: Punishment for Child Marriage and Betrothal"*

(Law Nigerian Admin, 2018)

OCHA (2022) claims that girls constitute 54% of children in need because they cannot access education and are victims of sexual violence and early marriage. According to UNICEF (2021), in 2018 the percentage of women aged 20-24 who were married or in a union before the age of 18 was 43.4%. In 2017, they noted that Nigeria has more than 23 million girls and women who were married as children; this is the highest number in Africa. This number is expected to double by 2050 due to the high speed at which the population is growing in Nigeria (UNICEF, 2021).

Human Rights Watch (2021) stated that the number of girls not attending school, but who are instead sent off to marriage at an early age, is high and they remain unprotected. They claimed that there is a lack of legislation implemented to prevent this, meaning that families are free to make this decision, often for something in return. The more that families struggle in the northeastern parts of the country due to high rates of insecurity, poverty, and unemployment, the more they search for options and ways to survive. If there is a lack of legislation surrounding this situation, then there is subsequently a lack of punishment for those taking advantage of this situation too.

### ***2.1.5 Crime, Abduction, and Removal***

*“Article 26: Use of children in Other Criminal Activities.*

*Article 27: Abduction, removal and transfer from lawful custody.”*

(Law Nigerian Admin, 2018)

Articles 26 and 27 outline that children should not be subjected to abduction or kidnapping, should not be used to commit a crime, and should be protected from all forms of usage during criminal activities (Law Nigerian Admin, 2018). These laws have been broken and demonstrate some of the situations where the State has not effectively protected children during the insurgency. UNODC (2017) notes that children recruited by extremist groups become involved in serious and dangerous crimes such as trafficking and other offences. It tries to determine what the judicial consequence should be for children used in criminal activities, who did not freely choose to be involved. These children are victims, but they are also often taunted by what extremists have

taught them to do and say. UNODC (2017) highlights, in connection with articles 26 and 27, Article 39 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which says that “state parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim”. Children who have been exploited and forced to participate in criminal activities and armed conflict, should be protected and supported by the law. Last (2020) foregrounds the fact that many young boys who are lost and have nowhere to go, take the offer of shelter and work by criminal groups.

Kabir (2022) foregrounds the fact that the kidnappings conducted by Boko Haram are in violation of Article 27 of the Child’s Rights Act. He also notes a violation of Article 26, in the situations where children are kidnapped, recruited, and forced to become sex slaves for the extremist soldiers. Irabor (2022) highlights that since the kidnapping of the Chibok girls in 2014, Boko Haram has not stopped abducting children; however, he declares that these crimes have been less and less reported. Verjee and Kwala (2021) note an abuse of rights when discussing the State’s reaction to abductions and children used as hostages. They claim that whilst failing to protect the children, the State is also putting other civilians at risk with the use of underthought militarisation and reactions. In the process of terrorist attacks and school closures, Ayodele (2019) asserts that school targeting leaves children injured, killed and kidnapped.

### ***2.1.6 Exploitative Labour and Dealing in Children***

*“Article 28: Prohibition of Exploitative Labour;*

*Article 29: Application of the Labour Act;*

*Article 30: Prohibition of buying, selling, hiring, or otherwise dealing in children for the purpose of hawking or begging for alms or prostitution, etc.”*

(Law Nigerian Admin, 2018)

UNICEF (2017) found that the percentage of children between 5 and 17 who were engaged in child labour was nearly a third of the population within that age range. 30.67% of the female population between 5 and 17; and 32.25% of the male population. This shows that there are slightly more boys than girls who are subjected to early

labour; however, the gap is not significant and the number of children, no matter of gender, already labouring is unacceptable. Decker (2020) notes that gender plays a role in this as girls are more likely to be sexually exploited or trafficked for the sex industry. The reason for this number of children in labour is most likely due to the high rates of poverty and the necessity to provide for one's family. Decker (2020) agrees that children often work to support their families. She presents various facts about child labour in Nigeria and claims that industries employ children for "physical and labour-intensive tasks". She says that there is a lack of legislation surrounding workplace conditions and that children work in dangerous environments. She also links the need to work with the reason for the high rate of school dropouts.

Taiwo (2013, p.248), in the conclusion of his article titled "Transforming almajiri education for the benefit of Nigeria", notes that the government of Nigeria must put more effort into enforcing the 2003 Child's Rights Act, especially in northern states. This is because articles 28, 29, and 30, are being violated when it comes to almajiri children who are being insufficiently supported by their Mallams or parents and are forced to find ways to become self-reliant and bring money and resources back to their religious institution. Last (2020, p.233) notes the struggles of poorer families and almajiri children, he explains that boys and girls sell things on the streets and at junctions for money in the bigger cities. He describes that many of the children have no other choice but to beg and hawk. Decker (2020) claims that children working on the streets are "easy targets for violence and kidnapping".

### ***2.1.7 Sexual Abuse and Exploitation***

*"Articles 31: Unlawful sexual intercourse with a child;  
Article 32: Forms of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation"*

(Law Nigerian Admin, 2018)

OCHA (2022) identifies women and girls who are subjected to gender-based violence (GBV). They claim that 54% of the 1.4 million people in need due to GBV are children. The states with the highest number of cases are Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe. In the



theoretical framework, it discussed Oweoko's (2017) book on men and women fighting extremism in Africa. She outlines cases of sexual assault and gender-based violence during times of conflict, especially during the Chibok kidnappings by Boko Haram. Girls who have been abducted by Boko Haram, forced to work in terrorist camps and used as slaves, are subjected to exploitation and sexual abuse. Although the State has been able to negotiate the release of some of these child victims, Khalid and Fitzgerald (2022) outline that hundreds of girls remain trapped in their camps and under terrorist supervision.

In 2015, the Nigerian government introduced the Violence Against Persons Act (2015) which aimed to punish perpetrators of rape, sexual assault, violence, intimidation, incest, and many more. It claims that those who commit the crime of rape will be imprisoned for life (NAPTIP, 2019). It also notes that those who perform Female Genital Mutilation will be imprisoned for a term "not exceeding 4 years or a fine not exceeding N200,000.00 or both" (NAPTIP, 2019). The lack of punishment for genital mutilation could be the reason why Nigeria experiences an extremely high number of victims of this crime. UNICEF (2017) reports on the many cases of women and girls subjected to genital mutilation, Nigeria having the third highest number of victims of this worldwide.

Decker (2020) foregrounds the statistics on girl victims who are smuggled across the Nigerian border and taken to brothels; they show that the figures are among the highest in the world. Human Rights Watch (2019) described the situation in which women and girls are offered jobs if they travel outside the country or to different areas of the country with these "recruiters". They note that they are then forced to have sex with clients and are threatened to keep them from running away. Following this, they are passed from exploiter to exploiter, sold, abused, and raped. Human Rights Watch (2019) notes that these stories are common, and although there "is no reliable data" to find out the true number of victims, it is expected to be significantly high. They noted that according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the majority of trafficked persons in Europe come from Nigeria and that the number of them in Italy in 2017 had increased by 600%.

### **2.1.8 Prohibition of Recruitment**

*“Article 34: Prohibition of Recruitment of Children into the Armed Forces”*

(Law Nigerian Admin, 2018)

UNODC (2017) claims that estimates show that around 8000 children have been recruited by Boko Haram since 2009. 2009 represents the year that Yusuf was killed, and that Boko Haram grew into a wave of violence and attacks. When recruiting children, UNODC (2017) explains that this includes forced marriage, being compelled to carry equipment and weapons, and being coerced into attacking their own family. Boko Haram uses children to hide their attacks and make them more unexpected. They instil fear into their minds and brainwash them into committing horrific acts. UNODC (2017) gives an example of a 12-year-old girl forced to fire a bomb at a bus station within Yobe state. Not only are preventive measures and the protection of these children necessary, but the children also need to be supported afterwards to ensure that the same situation does not occur again.

Additionally, OCHA (2022) develops on the number of children who are forcibly recruited by insurgents in the northeast of Nigeria. Boys, which comprise 46% of children in need, are at high risk of being recruited and abducted. Last (2020) highlights the idea that the extremists offer some form of a better life, a paradise, to the children for their future. When many feel alienated in a new city or do not have relatives around, they may be more at risk of listening to these groups and believing what they say. Decker (2020) observes that children as young as 10 are forced to leave their homes and given a weapon without a clear explanation of how to use it. She claims that between 2013-2017 UNICEF noted that 3500 child soldiers were recruited, many of whom died whilst fighting due to being under-protected and not given enough supplies. The lack of interference by the State to prevent this or protect the children from recruitment is a violation of Article 34.

### **2.1.9 Best Interest and Protection of a Child**

*“Article 1: Best interest of a child to be the paramount of consideration in all actions.*

#### *Part IV - Protection of Children*

*Article 45: Duty of a State Government to Investigate.*

*Article 46: Disclosure of whereabouts, etc. of children who may be in need of emergency protection.*

*Article 47: Abduction of children in care, etc.*

*Article 48: Refuge for children at risk.”*

(Law Nigerian Admin, 2018)

Article 1 and Part IV of the Child’s Right Act have been brought to the end of this chapter to portray that all abuses of the above articles interlink into the violation of these articles also. The best interests of a child should include protecting them in all situations, including protecting them from acts of violence, unlawful recruitment, sexual assault, abductions, and more. Masten and Narayan (2012) outline how children read and analyse their parents' reactions from an early age; therefore, if they grow up feeling that their parents are in fear, this has adverse effects on their growth. The issue is that in a time of conflict, whether a child is directly or indirectly affected, they will still feel some adverse effects (Mastern and Narayan, 2012). Whilst trying to act in the best interest of a child and considering them in all actions can become out of a caregiver's control, they then need the protection and support of their community, their school, and their State. Communities are under threat, schools are closing down, and the State has not yet been able to protect all children affected by the insurgency. Therefore, the best interest of each child is not always protected.

The number of children threatened and vulnerable due to the insurgency should be protected under Part IV as being victims at a time of emergency. They are being put at risk and under-protected by the State, further violating articles 42 and 48 of Part IV which refer to protection during times of emergency and the State’s duty to investigate (Law Nigerian Admin, 2018). After having seen the data above, specifically with the

help of the OCHA (2022), it has been demonstrated that the number of children under-protected and not being prioritised by the State is high. While this number remains high, the development of youth in Nigeria cannot progress and children cannot reach their potential. Linking this to Part XV of the Child's Rights Act, "State Government Support for Children and Families" (Law Nigerian Admin, 2018), it is evident that children are not adequately protected by the State. Many do not have accommodation, care, or services if they are in need. Cooperation and consultation with authorities, especially the governors of education, appears to not take place in the Northeast because there are no evident attempts to help the high numbers of children who remain out of school and homeless. Therefore, the State is not complying with the duty of Part XV and is leaving children to suffer due to this inefficiency.

Decker (2020) claims that a child's place should be in school, safe and able to enjoy their basic rights. She notes that the State must eliminate child labour and protect children from being vulnerable to insecurities. During the empirical research, personal cases of all of these violations will be discussed. Many of the interviewees see children working to feed themselves, see them begging, homeless, and out of school. The interviewees themselves are also people who have had disruptions to their studies and livelihoods, people who have been victims of the State's violation of the Child's Right Act.

### ***Conclusion***

Although the Child's Rights Act is intended to protect all children in Nigeria and was adopted in 2003, it is clear, specifically in the Northeast, that children are not enjoying their basic rights. As the majority of the almajiri child population is in the Northeast, there are a high number of vulnerable children living on the streets and fending for themselves. Due to the insurgency, which has a disproportionate impact on the BAY regions, many parents of children have been killed or lost in attacks on their villages. Insurgents also contribute to the violation of articles involving gender-based violence and forced early marriage. For example, when they kidnap and terrorise towns, they take girls with them for the purpose of marriage and slavery. The northeastern regions

are struggling to comply with the Child's Right Act, and this could be linked to factors such as a lack of focus from the national government, the inability of the region to adopt the act, the existence of insurgents, poverty, and unemployment. Poverty leads people to act in desperation, commit crimes, and place themselves or others in vulnerable situations. The next chapters of this thesis will continue to outline the breaches of these articles which take place every day on the ground in the BAY regions. With the help of the interviewees and a comparative analysis of the empirical research and the literature, more detail of these violations will be revealed.

### **CHAPTER 3 - EMPIRICAL RESEARCH - THE INTERVIEWS**

This section of the research project introduces the interview candidates involved in this study on how youth are impacted by the insurgency and how Boko Haram has affected the dynamics within Nigeria. They have allowed an authentic and true perception of the situation in northeast Nigeria, which is often insufficiently recognised in the West, to be incorporated into this analysis. They opened up to this research and gave insight into their lives, the situations they have faced, their education, their opinion on the insecurities in northern Nigeria and the groups most affected by them. The layout of this section will consist of a personal profile of each of the ten interviewees; it will split into different themes and combine the discussions with the interviewees with some incorporation of outside research. Linking back to the three main groups discussed in Chapter 1, this chapter will outline the role of the State in the opinion of those on the ground, the role of Boko Haram and the role of the people. The conclusion will highlight the common trends in the discussions that allowed for the determination of the most impacted groups in contemporary Nigerian society. It will outline the final questions which allowed them to describe Nigeria to an outsider, and present their thought-out solutions to the insecurities. Some of the interviewees preferred to remain anonymous; as mentioned above in the methodology section, fake names will be created for them, to protect and respect their wishes. These interviews were conducted over a two-month period in November and December 2022.

Hearing the voices of people on the ground in Nigeria is an essential part of understanding and sympathising more closely with the situations they face and the lifestyles they live and breathe. The people who chose to participate in these interviews were found with the help of Obi and YOUPEDA. They are people from diversified backgrounds, people with varying opinions on the State, insecurity, the unemployment crisis, and youth development. When discussing the interviews conducted, it is hoped that common trends will be found between the interviews, to highlight the groups most affected by the insurgency, the prevailing feelings towards the State, and the general opinion on a solution to tackle Boko Haram and to improve the future of Nigeria.

### **3.1 Personal Profiles**

*Mbadufu - 26.12.22 - Borno State*

Mbadufu is a 26-year-old Christian woman who was born and raised in Borno state and studied at the Yola Federal College of Education. Following her studies, Mbadufu graduated to become a teacher and has worked in a private school in Maiduguri since 2020. The children she teaches range from the age of 5 to 7 years. In the school where she currently works, Mbadufu claimed that the cost of schooling and living has increased since the beginning of the insurgency and parents are struggling to get their children into education. Many parents have lost their jobs in their villages after having to flee due to the insurgency. Mbadufu speaks of the brilliance of the children with whom she works, who have so much potential but often cannot afford to pay for school or bare necessities like food. It is the insurgency that is causing this struggle and the impact it has on children and families. Mbadufu was staying in Adamawa state when she witnessed a Boko Haram attack, they attacked and killed people, bombed their houses, their wells, and more. Although Mbadufu witnessed this event in Adamawa, she has never seen an attack in her current home state Borno.

*Auwal - 24.11.2022 - Adamawa State*

Auwal was born in 1991, in the northeast of Nigeria; he was the first interviewee to take part in this research. He works for the Norwegian Refugee Council in Yola, helping promote the importance of education to almajiri children and IDPs within the age range of 10 to 15. He helps to teach these children about entrepreneurship and how they can participate in the future development of Nigeria. In addition, he helps teach children about personal hygiene, ensuring that they take care of themselves and their health and bodies. Auwal developed on the situation on the ground in Yola, Adamawa state. He said that many of the IDP children had to flee after the Boko Haram attacks or due to the increase in floods in Nigeria. When working with IDP children, he aims to help them see the importance of studying, learning how to fix things, gaining knowledge, finding motivation, and striving to become an entrepreneur. Auwal says that he supports

the idea of teaching children to become entrepreneurs because more people need to become self-employed in Nigeria and make a living for themselves without relying on employment struggles and the State.

*Mustapha - 01.12.22 - Adamawa State*

Mustapha grew up in the northeast of Nigeria, went to secondary school in Yola, and then went to university in Maiduguri to study a BSc in health and education. Mustapha has a diploma from the International Training Centre for the International Labour Organisation and seven certificates from the United States Institute of Peace on the United Nations e-campus. Since 2016, Mustapha has been working as a protection advocate for the International Human Rights Commission, in the sub-sector of child protection and gender-based violence. Mustapha works with survivors of violence and sexual assault; he conducts risk assessments and helps identify their basic needs. He has worked on cases involving children no older than a few days of age. He emphasised the fact that in Adamawa state, cases are under-reported, but that most of the situations are perpetrated by men, some of which have been Boko Haram soldiers. He spoke of the sexually transmitted diseases with which women and girls return after being victimised by insurgents. Mustapha discussed the need for more reporting, more psychological support, and more dialogue. In terms of dialogue, he believes that community leaders and religious leaders need to collaborate without political influence to help their communities and identify the needs of those struggling. Mustapha described the number of unaccompanied children within Adamawa state and the lack of intervention and support that they are receiving.

*Ishaya - 23.12.22 - Borno State*

Ishaya is a 23-year-old private law student at the University of Maiduguri. He described himself as an activist, a writer, and an intern at a law firm. He said that his studies have been interrupted three to four times due to attempted terrorist attacks. The night before one of his final exams, the university was attacked but they did not postpone the exam, so many people missed it due to fear. Ishaya spoke of the security forces currently at the



university and the fact that, although these attacks have affected his studies, he now feels much safer than he used to. Ishaya mentioned the danger on the roads leaving the city of Maiduguri, if you travel to Yobe state on public transport, there is a chance that you may be kidnapped by Boko Haram. He also voiced the idea that finding employment after university is something people struggle with, but his goal is to continue with further education or a PhD.

*Yakin - 23.12.22 - Borno State*

Yakin recently graduated from university with a degree in computer engineering; he believes in the importance of youth empowerment and finding ways to be self-reliant without the support of the government. With computer engineering, he hopes to start up on his own and be self-dependent. Although Yakin works freelance on some small projects, he voices the struggles that he is facing as a recent graduate to find a job. He claims that people are working beyond retirement age and that there are no job opportunities due to corruption and insecurity levels. He emphasised the need for foreign investment that can enable graduates, from poor backgrounds but with great potential, to access jobs. Yakin also disclosed a situation in 2018 and 2019 where his parents were abducted by bandits in the north of Nigeria; he claimed that in these situations you have no choice but to pay and if you cannot, then you have to borrow money to save your family. It was these kidnappings by bandits, along with Boko Haram attacks, killing people he knew, that delayed Yakin's graduation. Now, Yakin hopes to find a job in the industry he is trained in, in the meantime, he will continue his freelance projects and his goal to be self-employed.

*Adeolu - 23.12.22 - Yobe State*

Adeolu is a civil servant and pharmacy technician working in specialist hospitals. He studied health and technology in Nguru and claimed that the insurgency continuously affected his studies, as the threat of attack was severe, and focussing was impossible. He claimed that many of his colleagues fled because of the psychological impact of the insurgency being too heavy. Those most affected in Adeolu's opinion are in the age

range of 15 to 30 years, as many have been left to feel like they have nothing to do and have no future ambition due to poverty and insurgents. He spoke of employment struggles, the tension between ethnicities and religions, and the fact that the governing structures are unfaithful to their work. Adeolu believes that Nigeria needs to stay united, but that for now, many people are suffering.

*Nina - 27.12.22 - Borno State*

Nina works as a lab technologist at the University of Maiduguri; she studied chemical engineering there prior to her job. Nina is married with two children and lives in the city of Maiduguri. She opened up about life in the city and in the North during the insurgency as a woman and a mother. She spoke of interruptions in 2012 when the university closed for around 6 months due to security threats. However, she claimed that more recently there is a high presence of security at the University and schools, and to enter the University you need an identity card. She spoke of parents' fear of letting their children go to school, which she claimed was not an issue for her in the city but remained a concern for those in the villages. Nina has witnessed insurgent attacks herself and recognises the impact these events have on the population and specifically the women of northern Nigeria. She and her husband work together to ensure that their children are raised in a safe environment and will have access to education.

*Kanko - 23.12.22 - Borno State*

Kanko is Nina's husband and works for the World Food Programme in telecommunications and security. The job is based in the city of Maiduguri, where Kanko and his family live; however, it requires him to travel around the northern regions installing radio satellites and facilitating communication within the most rural of locations. He studied electrical engineering at the University of Maiduguri and previously worked in Adamawa state as well. Kanko described the complications of accessing the northeastern regions and the difficulties that humanitarian responders face when trying to reach these areas. Most of the northeastern villages only have the radio as a form of communication and to stay connected. According to Kanko, settling the

insecurity will only be possible with the help of non-governmental organisations and by returning to the root cause, restructuring, and deradicalising the radicalised. Combined, Kanko and Nina gave insight into life as parents in the Northeast, raising children in a city that has been significantly affected by terrorism and that is adjusting to new security measures, but remains under threat due to insurgents. Kanko wanted to separate the bad reputation given internationally to Nigeria from the true greatness and potential of the country.

*Abubakar - 24.12.22 - Adamawa State*

Abubakar works with a mosque organisation that offers vocational training and skill acquisition to people. He travelled through Borno and Yobe states helping to train those affected by Boko Haram to do skills like barbing, shoe making, repairs, cosmetics, etc. He works with children aged 13 and above. Abubakar has worked in different northern communities trying to get more children to school; he claimed that many do not attend because of the insurgency, but also because of the lack of seriousness towards education by parents. He claimed that fear and financial problems play into this but are not the sole reason, and many parents just do not see the advantages of education. Abubakar hopes that he can get more children into education or acquiring skills and help support the communities most affected by the insurgency. In the search to improve youth development, Abubakar has founded an association in Adamawa state whereby he uses his funds and savings to educate children. He hopes that over time he can help as many children as possible; for now, he is working with unaccompanied children from the age of 7 to 12 years and hopes to also help almajiri and IDP children in the future. He believes that schools need to be better equipped and that the government needs to support the areas it has neglected the most.

*Patience - 27.12.22 - Borno State*

Patience is a student of mass communication at the University of Maiduguri; she is 22 years old and hopes to graduate in September. Her tertiary studies were interrupted for a period of three months because of the pandemic and strikes by the Academic Staff

Union of Universities (ASUU). Furthermore, during her primary and secondary education in Adawama state, her studies were disrupted many times due to Boko Haram attacks. The insurgents would try to take the girls and shoot the boys. Therefore, when attacks occurred Patience and her fellow students would run and hide wherever they could. One time Patience fled an attack and hid in the bush for seven days until the security forces arrived. Once she was reunited with her family, they decided to relocate to Maiduguri where she feels it is slightly safer than her previous home in a rural village in Adamawa state. Patience would like to become a fashion designer and a self-reliant entrepreneur. She believes in the need for more security to allow more children to go to school and acquire skills.

### **3.2 Discussing Almajiri Children**

The almajiri children have existed in Nigeria since the 11th century (Okonkwo, 2017), but only a few people know who they are and what challenges they face in terms of living, surviving, obtaining an education and future prospects. This section aims to discuss who the 'almajiri' children are, why many of them are not at school, what strategies could help them thrive, and the potential misconception that almajiri children are vulnerable to Boko Haram recruitment. It will look at what is happening on a national level and what the interviewees believe needs to happen in order to help them. This section will expose the idea that these children are not being sufficiently supported by the State or anyone, and that their rights are being violated. Almajiri children are often misunderstood, and the media and researchers often fail to explain who they really are and why they have turned to street hawking, homelessness, lacking education, etc. It is essential to confront the stereotypes surrounding almajiri children and their disapproval or hatred of Western education. These stereotypes ignore the truth that most of the almajiri children are looking for help, want to be educated, and want to be able to build a prosperous future. These groups of almajiri children do not just represent a problematic group, but they represent a group who is under-noticed and if given the opportunity could thrive and help support the further economic development of Nigeria.

### ***3.2.1 Who are the Almajiri Children?***

Ishaya described an almajiri child as someone “who usually leaves their home to live with a teacher in the quest to achieve Islamic knowledge”. He claimed that the number of almajiri children continues to increase and that their teachers often do not have room to host them, so they are homeless<sup>1</sup>. Often described as hard to miss, especially in the streets of the northern regions of Nigeria, almajiri children represent a significant proportion of children in the country who are not attending school (Akintunde et al., 2020). In fact, according to Okonkwo (2022), almajiri children represent most children in northern Nigeria and more than 60% of the 13.2 million children who do not go to school. In agreement with Ishaya, Adamu (2019) declares that the name “almajiri” comes from the Arabic word “al-muhajirun” which describes a person who left his home to seek Islamic education and knowledge. To begin with, these children would be sent away from their homes to Islamic institutions where they would be taught Arabic and the Qur’an by a religious teacher or Mallam (Hoechner, 2018). They would live within religious institutions and would be provided with food and resources by their teacher and the surrounding community (Hoechner, 2018). Okonkwo (2022, p.2) notes that almajiri children have existed since pre-colonial times, where the goal was to “build in young minds sound doctrines of Islam”.

Adamu (2019) describes how the almajiri system used to be funded by the State, but that this was changed in connection with British colonisation and the introduction of Western education (Boko). Okonkwo (2022, p.2) elaborates on this by claiming that colonisation fuelled the collapse of the almajiri school system, that the status of Islamic teachers was removed, and they became “unqualified for employment”. She notes that instead of the children being an essential component of the Islamic institutions, they continued to be sent there by parents and became a burden that the teachers were unable to support. During the interview with Kanko, he told us that it is important to look at the root causes of the situation in Nigeria as a whole, that the divides existed before colonialism, but that the arrival of “colonial masters” was a threat to the northern Islamic parts of Nigeria. They were reluctant to accept new governance structures and

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<sup>1</sup> “I wish I could snap a picture for you to see them just laying on the streets without food or clothing, especially in winter. The almajiri children and how they live is just so unfortunate.” (Ishaya, 2022)

ways of life<sup>2</sup>. Bertoni et al. (2019) claim that colonisation by the British fuelled uneven divides between the North and the South of Nigeria and that the transition post-independence from military to civilian rule was not peaceful.

Bringing this to today, due to the lack of State funds and the post-colonisation situation, almajiri children have had to begin working for money to fuel their institutions, including working on the streets, singing, begging, and hawking (Adamu, 2019). The Almajiri Child Rights Initiative (2023) claims that many scholars “lack the capacity to fully support children” and cannot adequately protect their welfare. Due to this, many children live on the streets and do not have access to food, resources, healthcare, or hygiene awareness. Yakin described the struggle between the fact that the institutions cannot provide for the almajiri children, but often the children were sent to these schools because their parents could also not afford to care for them<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, going home is often not possible; even when the children are as young as 4 or 5, they are forced to remain on the streets and find ways to survive. Yakin said that if you ask these children what they want to do, what they are trying to become, or what they want to achieve, they have no idea because they do not necessarily understand life or the circumstances they are in, they just stay alive as well as they can and copy those around them<sup>4</sup>.

When asking Adeolu about almajiri children, he added to this by describing that some of the children have parents and others do not<sup>5</sup>. Many of them who do not have parents have lost them during the insurgency, poverty, floods, and the pandemic. Adeolu agrees with Yakin that many parents choose to send their children to these schools because they cannot afford to keep them at home and feed them. This feels like a form of vicious catch, as sending their children away can result in their children being left to provide for

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<sup>2</sup> “The problem started when they came, so the Muslims and other people in the North find the way of life of the white man strange and different to their religion.” (Kanko, 2022)

<sup>3</sup> “You see some have parents, but they don’t have anything to do and cannot provide for their children. They leave them for the world and for the world to make them what they will be.” (Yakin, 2022)

<sup>4</sup> “They ask you what are you trying to become, what is your personal hobby, what are you trying to achieve? They don’t have such plans because they lack that background to understand where they are heading because the government schools don’t help students to understand where they are going and how am I planning for my future.” (Yakin, 2022)

<sup>5</sup> “Some of them are orphans and some of them have parents, and the orphans have to take care of themselves, provide for themselves what they eat, what you drink, what you wear.” (Adeolu, 2022)

themselves at far too young of an age. Adeolu also confirms the claim from the almajiri Rights Initiative (2023), that most almajiri institutions do not have the capacity to host the number of children arriving. This number is increasing following the economic impact that families are facing due to the insurgency. Auwal says that some of the institutions have up to 400 students<sup>6</sup>. He expressed that the almajiri children are uncountable, there are limitless numbers of them living on the streets in Adamawa because they cannot all fit in the Mallam's house. Yakin notes the same in Borno state, with the number of almajiri children continuously increasing<sup>7</sup> following the struggles that families are dealing with and the overall economy in Nigeria worsening as the insurgency, mass displacement and rise of unemployment continues.

The reason why cities are often chosen by almajiris is because they are where most of the religious institutions are, but also due to the lack of funds, the almajiris would not be able to survive in rural areas without support. Hoechner (2018) discusses the importance of location and the feelings around where one can be most successful and gain the most future returns. Many of the almajiri students that Hoechner (2018) interviewed told her that there was no money to be made in rural areas. They claimed that in these areas they have no way of being seen by the State and struggle to access necessities such as food or cash. Almajiris tend to be blamed for any of the bad behaviour in rural areas and do not have enough teachers to take responsibility for them all. This lack of resources fuels the invisibility of their needs and makes them more vulnerable to feeling neglected and angry towards divides in society. Location is also important in Last's work (2020), which supports the idea that achieving work in urban areas is more attractive to those seeking money and the almajiri children who have left home.

Kanko notes that almajiri children come to his street every day in Maiduguri, every morning begging for food or "menial jobs"<sup>8</sup>. There is an important factor to mention here, which is the existence of child labour. Child labour is almost unavoidable for

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<sup>6</sup> "You can see in one tsangaya, the children reaching up to 400, sometimes you see them, there are many, there are many almajiri tsangaya inside our community." (Auwal, 2022)

<sup>7</sup> "Let me say seriously I have seen with my eyes in Borno, they are getting worse, the number of almajiri children are increasing everyday." (Yakin, 2022)

<sup>8</sup> "Even in my street they come every morning begging for food saying help us, some of them will come and they need menial jobs." (Kanko, 2022)

almajiri children who have to provide for themselves. They will ask for jobs in exchange for money to get some food. Kanko said that although he was against all forms of child labour, that at times, he would ask those who are slightly older, 13,14 or 15, to go and buy him something and he would give them money in return for their 'help'. He said that for the older children, this might give them a small mission or job for the day. Unfortunately, not all people have the right intentions like Kanko. In most cases, children being forced to work for money and survival at such a young age is a violation of their rights. The predominant opinion, noted by the Almajiri Rights Initiative (2023) and Okonkwo (2022), is that, in general, the almajiri situation is a situation where children's rights are being violated. Almajiri children are not being adequately cared for, and the lack of support they are receiving is a denial of their basic rights (Okonkwo, 2022).

### ***3.2.2 The Western Education Question***

Adamu (2019) claims that the formal way to call almajiris or their form of education is "tsangaya". This is a term that Auwal used in the interviews conducted for this investigation. Auwal expressed that in "tsangayas", hygiene promotion is not taught, and no form of Western education is included in their curriculum<sup>9</sup>. He said that the Mallams do not agree with teaching children to read non-Islamic literature. Mbadufu explained to us that they only learn Arabic and Islamic studies. The almajiri system significantly contrasts with Western education; it does not teach any of the same topics and focusses purely on learning Arabic and the Quran. Hoecher (2018) notes that the almajiri system is reserved for men and is based on the ideology that women do not need the education that men do. Mustapha developed on this by saying that Islamic education deprives almajiri children of enjoying Western education. This is mainly because the parents of the children and the Mallams believe that Western education is a Christian education and does not conform to Islam. Mustapha emphasised the importance of removing this association between Christianity and Western education<sup>10</sup>,

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<sup>9</sup> "If sometime you go to tsangaya schools, you're not taught things like hygiene promotion, how to clean their bodies or any Western education." (Auwal, 2022)

<sup>10</sup> "These children are deprived from enjoying Western education [...] because of the understanding, the negative understanding their parents have that Western education are mainly for Christian believers." (Mustapha, 2022)



and opening dialogue with Mallams and religious teachers to raise awareness of how beneficial Western education can be to children and their future. A significant problem is that once almajiri education is completed, children remain lost, unsure of what to do next with their lives, or unable to become self-reliant as they have not obtained any practical skills. Most of them only speak Arabic, which puts them at a disadvantage in Nigerian society. If they are looking for jobs or things to do, but do not have any qualifications or acquired skills, they will grapple, especially with the already existing struggle for employment that will be touched upon later in this chapter.

Kanko says that in the aftermath of British colonisation, still today many Muslims in the North do not go to school and believe that Western education is a sin and something that is strange to them. He says this derives from the past and from the “whites” being viewed by Muslims as infidels. It comes from the idea of a divide between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and develops from the perspective that the arrival of the ‘whites’ was unasked for, and changed the dynamics of the country<sup>11</sup>. Kanko emphasises the fact that the problems with education and cultural divides in northern Nigeria are not new, but in fact existed even before colonisation. Gwadabe et al. (2018) assert that the reality in northern Nigeria is rooted in the colonial era. Today, if Muslims want a Western education, they become infidels in the eyes of terrorists such as Boko Haram. Although many parts of the Muslim population can see the advantages of Western education, there is now also an aspect of danger that plays into this. Many parents in the Northeast fear putting their children in school due to the insurgents and feel it is safer to send them into the almajiri system.

### ***3.2.3 Allowing Almajiri Children to Succeed***

Abubakar has recently founded a charity to empower young people and train them to acquire skills and become self-reliant in the future. For now, his target age range has been from 7-12 years old, and he has already managed to get at least 10 children into schools, paying for their resources with his own savings<sup>12</sup>. Abubakar’s goal is to include

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<sup>11</sup> “I remember when I was growing up, a couple of Muslims around me they didnt like going to school, so they see this Western education as states of the infidel as a strange thing to them.” (Kanko, 2022)

<sup>12</sup> “Right now I think I have 10 students which I personally enrolled in the school, I provide the learning resources for them, which is funded with my own savings.” (Abubakar, 2022)

all groups of youth, including almajiri and IDP children, that are struggling and who do not have access to education. For now, he is building the foundations of his organisation and is in the process of registering as an official association. Abubakar believes that the way to empower almajiri children would be to implement new training programmes into their current Islamic curriculum. He wants to do this in a way that does not intrude on their religious goals or anger the Mallams. Instead, he wants to open dialogue with Mallams and persuade them to allow instructors to come into their tsangaya. He wants almajiri children to have access to learning technical skills that could allow them to be self-reliant in the future. This would mean that once almajiris graduate from their tsangaya, they will not be lost, but rather guided by the skills they have acquired and by some motivation to grow and be self-sufficient.

In 2012, the government under President Goodluck Jonathan was taking significant steps to modernise the almajiri school system (Taiwo, 2013). The aim was to reduce the number of children on the streets and provide a good quality education that would train the future generation of Nigeria, enabling them to access a variety of fields of employment. Taiwo (2013, p.247) claimed that previous attempts to modernise the almajiri system had failed due to “poor planning, lack of financial support, and mismanagement of resources”. This new 2012 attempt was an opportunity for the government to note its failure to protect these children and provide them with adequate education. It is evident from the interviews conducted for this research that the attempts that Taiwo (2013, p.247) speaks of to “sustain the almajiri school programme” have failed. Each of the interviewees stated that they saw an extremely high number of almajiri children roaming the streets in each of the BAY states in which they resided. In 2013 when Taiwo was writing his article, the government was showing various initiatives and claiming to be pushing for change in terms of almajiri education and child protection. Ten years later, Nigeria, under a different presidency, and with the initiatives that were mentioned, has not seen the almajiri situation resolved according to the interviewees. However, these initiatives match what Abubakar thinks would help the almajiris, that is, offering them more training in order to acquire skills and knowledge and open up their job prospects.

### ***3.2.4 The Impact of Covid-19***

Akintude et al. (2020) claim that the covid-19 pandemic increased the number of homeless almajiris because many Qur'anic schools in northern Nigeria were unable to house them. They note that the Mallams did not come up with an efficient plan to return the children to their homes. Okonkwo (2022) argues that the almajiri children were not sent home during the pandemic but instead were taken to the southern part of the country. She notes that these children have been failed by their parents, the State, and their religious teachers. Auwal, however, who lived in Adamawa state at the time of the pandemic, claimed that the number of almajiri children decreased significantly because they were told to go home to their families<sup>13</sup>. He used the words “told to go”, and therefore it is unclear whether they were safely sent home, but Auwal said that the number of them was low and that you could not see any of them around town. He also asserted that once the pandemic ended around 2021, the number of almajiri children in Adamawa increased significantly and is now higher than ever. It could be assumed that this is due to the economic impact that covid-19 may have had on communities in northern Nigeria. This has meant that more parents than ever could not afford to provide for their children, and therefore sent them to cities for a religious-based education.

Akintude et al. (2020) further declare that since the pandemic, many almajiri children are not being accounted for, and there is a lack of data and documentation on them. There is a high number of children left to care for themselves, and many have lost their parents due to a combination of the insurgency, the pandemic, and the floods. This is noted as a clear violation of human rights; these children are neglected and not protected from their basic right to health (Akintude et al., 2020). Mustapha said that the government claims that they are eliminating the almajiri programme when speaking to the rest of the world, yet there are still thousands of almajiri children on the streets and with their Mallams<sup>14</sup>. According to UNICEF (2020), the government made attempts to ban the almajiri system to limit the spread of coronavirus. UNICEF (2020) therefore

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<sup>13</sup> “When covid-19 hit in 2019, all the almajiris were told to go home to their families, there was any almajiri in the town.” (Auwal, 2022)

<sup>14</sup> “Directly the government are showing the world that they are doing their best to eliminate almajiri programme; but down on ground we have seen them, and we are seeing them even now.” (Mustapha, 2022)

decided to help reunite children with their families; however, the problem is that returning home to small communities in the North is often dangerous. Okonkwo (2022, p.3) noted that the “almajiri evacuation suggests that children in Nigeria were indeed exposed to the deadly coronavirus as figures of infected children soared”. The almajiri children were left to beg, and unlike other education systems, theirs did not incorporate innovative ways of continuing teaching (Okonkwo, 2022).

Many almajiri children were left in precarious situations and not supported sufficiently by authorities. Okonkwo (2022) notes that although almajiri children were not considered as vulnerable to covid during the pandemic, the other impacts of the pandemic affected them considerably. Furthermore, covid-19 thrives in areas where hygiene levels are low and where people are in close proximity to each other; this is the living situation in which many almajiri children live. They reside close to each other and on the streets, unaware of hygiene and sanitation or how to clean themselves. Even the few attempts to repatriate some of the almajiri children showed no sign of improvement, and the data does not show how many children actually were in this position (Akintude et al., 2020). Auwal also spoke about the common occurrence of cholera outbreaks; if one child has cholera, then 20 of them will follow<sup>15</sup>. The streets are full of these children, who suffer from poor health, neglect by the State, and a lack of support. The organisations on the ground, that are trying to help these children, lack the capacity and resources to assist them all. Now, in 2022, the State is unaware of how many children still suffer the consequences of the pandemic and how many children remain out of school, uneducated, and malnourished.

### ***3.2.5 Vulnerability to Recruitment?***

When Auwal, the interviewee working with the Norwegian Refugee Council, was asked about almajiris and their connection to terrorism, he closed the question down rapidly. He expressed that the connection between Boko Haram and almajiris being recruited by them was not true<sup>16</sup>. He said that in fact, the homeless almajiris in his region, Adamawa,

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<sup>15</sup> “We have children with cholera, if one person gets it, then you see 20 of them, they have cholera.” (Auwal, 2022)

<sup>16</sup> “These almajiri they need Western education, Boko Haram they are fighting on that education, but almajiri they don’t have any association with Boko Haram.” (Auwal, 2022)

wanted a Western education and support from associations to help them get off the streets. Auwal said that more help is needed to teach these children how to become entrepreneurs and change the fate of the region and its economy.

Adamu (2019) notes that the link between terrorism and almajiri children has been a topic of discussion; she makes sure to highlight that being an almajiri does not mean that they will be recruited by terrorists. However, the combination of “poverty, parental neglect, and social exclusion” makes them vulnerable to extremism (Adamu, 2019). She develops on this connection by explaining that Abubakar Shekau, the most recent leader of Boko Haram was, in fact, an almajiri when he met Mohammad Yusuf, the former leader, and moved from his village to Maiduguri. Hoechner (2018) agrees that Boko Haram can come across as an uncommon and unique opportunity for young migrant men looking to make a future for themselves; especially if they live in cities and struggle to associate with a group or make money.

Taiwo (2013) notes that it is begging that puts almajiri children in a situation where they are not under the supervision of their Mallams. Therefore, they are more prone to pick up bad habits and mix with unsafe surroundings, especially with the presence of terrorists in the Northeast. The situations in which the children are left, living on the streets, and struggling to survive could be the reason why people think they are vulnerable to extremist recruitment. For example, Omeni (2020) also argues that being out on the streets longer means that almajiri children are more prone and susceptible to “exploitation by terrorist groups such as Boko Haram”. She claims that Boko Haram appears to have recruited many young men who match the almajiri profile; they are “physically unkempt, and have limited English language skills”. Omeni (2020) also claims that these children become soldiers because they are angry, feel neglected, and feel that the State has failed them. There is a strong impression that almajiri children feel neglected and therefore demotivated to make something of themselves.

However, the interviewee, Auwal, says that the general opinion of almajiri children is that they want to go to school and get an education<sup>17</sup>. They see children in their cities

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<sup>17</sup> “*They want to study Western education, they want to go to school.*” (Auwal, 2022)

and areas, wearing uniforms, and skipping to school, and they want that too. Most of the almajiris, as previously mentioned, were sent away from their homes due to the lack of funds within their families. This means that at times they look at those going to school with admiration and wish they could afford that opportunity too. They are only children and, of course, extremists could try and convince them of what is right and wrong, but most of the time the almajiri children just need help, guidance, training, and support towards the right direction. Patience believes that if the government could help provide almajiri children with food, uniforms, and books, then they would go to school<sup>18</sup>. She says that many of them are small children from the age of 4 years. At 4 years old, they have not even completed the essential stages of child development, they cannot fully understand the world, and they should not have to fend for themselves.

It can be noted that there are gaps between what the literature surrounding Boko Haram and almajiri children is saying and what the interviewees living in northeastern Nigeria right now are saying. The almajiri children need help, they need to be supported before they even reach a point of vulnerability and neglect. The State and local governors need to be aware of who these children are and how many of them there are. If these children could be recognised, then that is the first step to ensure that they are helped more adequately.

### ***Conclusion***

In summary, almajiri children are children who have migrated from their homes in search of Islamic knowledge. Some of them were sent away because of their parent's wishes, and others because of financial struggles and limitations. Many also became almajiris because they lost their caregivers during the insurgency, pandemic, rising poverty, and climate crises. Now they roam the streets, begging, hawking, and looking for food, jobs, and help. A high number of them suffer from poor health, especially after the covid-19 pandemic, and are not sufficiently noticed by the State. Although the State has shown some initiatives to help the almajiri children, it is evident that their attempts

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<sup>18</sup> “If the government would be able to provide food for them and then school they shouldn't need to pay anything, even their uniforms should be provided, their books, they would go to school if they could eat.” (Patience, 2022)

have failed or perhaps never been properly implemented. The hope for these children is people like Abubakar, Mustapha, Obi, Adeolu, Mbadufu, Patience, Kanko, Nina, Ishaya, Yakin, and Auwal. It's the people on the ground in Nigeria, who care about their country, who worry about the children, who want to initiate dialogue, speak about issues, create solutions, train children and open the doors to their future.

### **3.3 Discussing Psychological Impact**

This section aims to bring attention to the psychological aftermath of Boko Haram's terrorising and the impact it has left on innocent people. The northeastern Nigerian population has faced situations of abuse, violence, conflict, kidnappings, poverty, displacement, and loss. Kidnappings, in particular, have instilled fear and anxiety in the lives of the families and children involved. One of the most recognised kidnappings was the case of Chibok schoolgirls in 2014, where more than 250 schoolgirls were taken by Boko Haram Soldiers (Shuaibu et al. 2015). Many other kidnappings have also taken place, and thousands of people have been forced to deal with the psychological impact. Whether this is because they were victimised by the insurgents, whether they escaped and are working to rebuild back to normality, or simply living in fear of recurrence or harm during future attacks. Unfortunately, living on the edge has become everyday life in northeastern Nigeria.

The emphasis is always on the economy, employment, and livelihoods; however, all these factors are related to psychology; the mental effects that losing your home, fleeing, and seeing your friends and family killed or taken can cause. Of course, growth in poverty is an important playing factor in psychology, as it fuels the struggle and the sacrifices that must be made as a result. Another important factor, which was discussed during the interview with Mustapha (Appendix 1), is the rise of gender-based violence that can be observed since the beginning of the insurgency and the post-trauma that many women and girls have been left to deal with. This section looks at the mental repercussions felt by people who have lived and are still living through the insurgency.

### ***3.3.1 The Chibok Kidnapping***

Auwal worked with the Chibok girls around the time when many of them had been released in 2018. He said that they were being supported by American organisations and universities that had begun to sponsor them and their studies. Khalid and Fitzgerald (2022) clarify that “it was not until May 2016, that the first girl was found”. They explain that between 2016 and 2018 many of the girls were freed during negotiations or had managed to escape. However, today, around 100 girls remain missing (Khalid and Fitzgerald, 2022). Auwal described his encounter with some of the released victims of this kidnapping. He had to explain to them who he was and assure them that he was there to help them. He said that many of them struggled to trust people after receiving death threats from members of Boko Haram. Auwal only spent one month with these girls as one of the presidents of Adamawa state had asked him to help provide them with food and education.

The book by Oweoko (2017) talks about girls fearing their return to school, specifically the case of a girl named Rebecca, who was abducted by Boko Haram during the Chibok kidnapping and who managed to escape. She has to continue her life knowing that others just like her are still taken by Boko Haram and subjected to the horrors that she witnessed. She was sent to live with her uncle in Abuja, a city in the centre of Nigeria, but she discussed with Oweoko (2017) the feelings she often felt at school and the reactions she would have to any kind of loud noise. Other children at her school in Abuja could not always understand what she had been through and why she reacted in these ways, but she was dealing with significant mental trauma. She is obliged to deal with intrusive thoughts and visions of violence and terror, and things she witnessed like beatings and stoning (Oweoko, 2017). She will live with these thoughts forever, along with hundreds of other children who have been, and remain, victims of similar events. How can these children not be affected by this trauma? How can they simply return to school, their supposed safe space, and act like these events did not happen? Returning to school was a significant challenge for Rebecca and for a long time, she did not want to. She was convinced by her parents that it was necessary for her future prospects (Oweoko, 2017). Although Rebecca knows this now, it does not take away what she



went through and the disruptions that this caused to her success and the changes it made to her career choices and path. This is just one example of how the acts of these terror groups are impacting people on a large scale in Nigeria.

### ***3.3.2 Parents and Fear***

Nina spoke of the remaining psychological impact on families, parents, and children since the Chibok attacks<sup>19</sup>. She claimed that still today many parents are afraid to let their children go to school; if they do allow it, they struggle with the fear and anxiety of what could happen. Many students from the University of Maiduguri did not return or complete their studies after 2014. Following various terror attacks that occurred, their parents felt it was too risky. Gender plays an important role in this because it is mostly women who fear being abducted by extremists. Patience described how the insurgents shoot the men and take the women and girls<sup>20</sup>.

Patience noted that during her days at the University of Maiduguri, they sometimes heard the sound of bombs or shootings. She described how many people were too scared to go back to school and carry on their studies. Although fear played a role in her education, she always felt that she could return and wanted to continue. Patience was lucky to have the opportunity to study in Kaduna for a while and then in Maiduguri. She was able to leave her village at times when the risk of terror was extremely high. For those who live in villages, there is additional fear since there is usually only one road towards the city, which is often at high risk of attack<sup>21</sup>. Many students during the insurgency have lost their freedom to choose, either due to financial restrictions or fear within families. People feel that if they move or leave their homes, they could be taken or killed. They no longer feel free and safe in their cities and villages. Hundreds of university students were unable to return to their studies in cities due to financial constraints and also because their parents did not want them to put themselves at risk.

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<sup>19</sup> “*Especially those parents in the villages, some of them are really afraid because of what happened in Chibok where some girls were abducted.*” (Nina, 2022)

<sup>20</sup> “*The Boko Haram scared our village and there was shooting, they shot the men and caught the women.*” (Patience, 2022)

<sup>21</sup> “*Not everybody left, only those who had the opportunity or places to go. For those that didn’t have anywhere to go, they stayed back.*” (Patience, 2022)

Bertoni et al. (2019, p.1) analyse the “microeconomic impacts” of Boko Haram and the insurgency on the education of children in the Northeast between 2009 and 2016. They note that when an increase in mortality occurs within 5 km of a child’s village, then the school enrolment levels decrease, along with the educational attainment levels. They observe that if children and villages are more affected by terror and conflict, then it has a significant impact on children’s education. This supports what various interviewees said about parents no longer wanting their children to go to school and children feeling more reluctant to go. They all agreed that the insurgency has affected the number of children in education. It is obvious that there are fewer children in schools because of the number that can be seen in IDP camps and living on the streets in cities.

### ***3.3.3 Posttraumatic Stress and Psychology***

Erahbor et al. (2020) conducted a study on the psychological impact felt by Nigerian women who have been forced to flee as a result of the insurgency. They found that an increased experience of violence, conflict, abuse, and higher levels of distress and mental health predicted more symptoms of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). Adimula and Ijere (2018) found that women and girls who have been forced to flee in the Northeast have been the most affected by psychological struggles. This is due to the amount of “physical and sexual abuse, rape, unwanted pregnancies, maternal mortality, trafficking, unsafe abortions, and contraction of sexually transmitted diseases” (Adimula and Ijere, 2018, p.24). Patience confirmed that the main targets of Boko Haram are women; they are the ones who are taken away, used, and abused. She claims that many of those affected by attacks and abductions in her village were forced to leave and move to IDP camps<sup>22</sup>.

Mustapha also spoke of his experience working with women and children who have been subjected to gender-based violence<sup>23</sup>. His job is to ensure that they get the care they need and that cases are properly reported to the right authorities. He has worked

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<sup>22</sup> “*Those that are displaced from their places, they live in IDP camps.*” (Patience, 2022)

<sup>23</sup> “*The motivating factor behind people perpetrating acts of child abuses is related sometimes with power dynamic, inequality, gender inequality, and disrespect for human rights.*” (Mustapha, 2022)

with many women and girls who were victims of Boko Haram, raped, and who contracted sexual-based-diseases from these experiences. He expressed the difficulties he faced in trying to get survivors to disclose what they have been through; many will be unwilling and just ask for medication to cure their contracted disease. The post-trauma impact that these situations have on girls' and women's lives is significant; many now struggle to hear loud noises and refuse to interact with others or attend school (Mustapha, 2022).

Adesina et al. (2020) develop on the study conducted by Erahbor et al. (2020) by highlighting the stress caused by displacement, losing family members, leaving one's livelihood, interrupting community support systems, and more. They emphasise that separation from one's family can have a significant impact on the well-being of individuals. This stress and mental pressure are weighed on by the insurgency that forces families and people to flee and seek refuge within busy and cramped IDP camps. This is further supported by Isokpan and Durojaye (2016), who claim that children who have suffered during traumatic events of displacement, food shortage, interruptions in their studies, or loss of family members are affected by posttraumatic stress disorders. They may suffer from "irritability, insomnia, sleep disorders, fear, aggression, confusion, and inability to concentrate" (Isokpan and Durojaye, 2016, p.9).

### ***3.3.4 Access to Support***

"The youth here are corrupt, their minds have been corrupted" said Abubakar when speaking about the importance of counselling and rehabilitation programmes<sup>24</sup>. He expressed the potential of young people and the capacities they could have if offered some support. Young people in northeastern Nigeria have often experienced terrible situations, had their studies disrupted, and have been left to deal with their mental struggles alone. Abubakar discussed projects that had been implemented to try and persuade the government to introduce counselling programmes in schools; he said that some have started to become available in Adamawa state with counselling units available in Yola. Adesina et al. (2020) outline the role that the government,

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<sup>24</sup> "I believe that each and every youth in Nigeria needs rehabilitation, because actually most of the youths here are corrupt and their minds are corrupted." (Abubakar, 2022)

community-based organisations, and NGOs must play to ensure the psychological well-being of those in northeastern Nigeria is supported.

Yakin claimed that in IDP camps they are often provided with food and supported by various organisations. However, he claims that only a few families are given the resources to rebuild their lives. Many continue to struggle, which could be due to the number of people within the camps<sup>25</sup>, but also due to the lack of focus on education and psychological support. Patience mentioned the role of NGOs in providing mental health care; she said that counsellors and therapists are hard to find, but that in IDP camps there are sometimes NGOs who offer support and provide various services. Adesina et al. (2020, p.17) confirm that humanitarian organisations have been involved in providing support services primarily within the BAY regions of Nigeria, which they call the “worst hit” by the insurgency. Although Adesina et al. (2020) show that organisations are present, they also foreground the fact that the services are limited and cannot provide for the number of people necessitating support, especially in Borno state. They claim that humanitarian operations are more restricted by the high presence of terror attacks, location and access issues, and network problems.

Mustapha highlighted the lack of psychological institutions and support for those struggling with post-traumatic stress<sup>26</sup>. He said that due to the complexity of the cases and the horrors that many have been through, specialist psychiatrists are required. Mustapha claimed that organisations such as IOM (International Organisation for Migration, 2023) offer mental health and psychological support and that the United Nations was working on ways to train people in psychological first aid to support those on the ground faster. The intervention of health and social workers is often not possible due to the reasons mentioned above by Adesina et al. (2020); therefore, those trained in psychological first aid become essential for the time being in Adamawa state.

Adeolu said that in Yobe state there were opportunities to access trauma healing, rather than individual counselling sessions. These involve gathering with people and

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<sup>25</sup> “The number of people that are needing IDP camps is beyond imagination and they are becoming a cramped place.” (Yakin, 2022)

<sup>26</sup> “Dealing with psychological aspect needs a specialist which we have very limited number of them here in Nigeria, precisely operating in the northeastern part.” (Mustapha, 2022)

answering a selection of questions designed to guide them and help them deal with a particular situation<sup>27</sup>. Group sessions are another possibility to help more people at once and respect limited resources. However, due to the complexity of some situations pointed out by Mustapha, group sessions may not be flexible to personal situations which can only be approached by specialists.

### ***Conclusion***

Compounding the consequences that victims of Boko Haram have had to face is an endless and complex challenge. No one can be mentally prepared for the impact that witnessing an attack or being victimised by a terrorist group can have on someone. People and children have been forced to manage their emotions, post-traumatic stress, fear, anxiety, and more. In the northeast of Nigeria, many already suffer from these psychological challenges but lack the access to support that the State and external organisations should provide. Although some organisations have tried to offer counselling and psychotherapy, efforts have been limited and insufficient to meet the number of people in need.

Various interviewees who participated in this investigation have been victims of attacks, attempted kidnappings, loss of family members, and forced to move or hide in the bush. Patience, for example, explained that her village had been attacked by Boko Haram members, forcing her to flee to the bush alone with strangers and reside there for seven days until government security arrived<sup>28</sup>. Her family did not know where she was and were uncertain if she was alive, kidnapped, or dead. After seven days, Patience was able to go back to the village and find her family. They decided there and then to leave the village once and for all. Patience explained that her family were lucky enough to be able to move, but that many people in her community were forced to stay. When asked if this situation had made Patience more fearful, she replied no. She said that she refused to

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<sup>27</sup> “Trauma healing has to do with gathering people and giving questions, they will give you questions and if you are able to answer those questions then it will guide you” (Adeolu, 2022)

<sup>28</sup> “So, we ran away, those of us that were able to run, and we went to the bush. And some people were killed so we didn’t leave the bush because they didn’t leave the town, they were living in our village, so we stayed there until the security came.” (Patience, 2022)

allow fear to occupy her mind and hold her back in her journey through life, to fulfilment and to success.

### **3.4 Discussing Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)**

Since the beginning of the insurgency in Nigeria, particularly in the BAY regions, the number of internally displaced people has dramatically increased. This chapter will help define internal displacement and build on the situation that the insurgency has created in the Northeast, which has been fuelled by water scarcity, floods, and poverty. It will discuss the situations within the IDP camps and the aid that is being provided by external organisations and authorities. The development and education of youth are vital to the future of Nigeria, and this section will touch on promises made by the authorities and their failure to meet them. It will analyse a combination of scholarly literature with the interviewee discussions which offer insight into the IDP crisis on the ground.

According to UNICEF's (2021) data, in 2020, there were a total of 2,873,000 internally displaced persons, 95% of whom were displaced due to conflict and violence. Only 5% were displaced due to natural disasters. These numbers show that although Boko Haram has been more restricted than in the years 2009-2016, millions of displaced persons remain, 1,436,900 of whom are under the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2021). The effects that this movement will have on their educational achievements are significant. According to the interviewees, movement from the northeast to the southern or western regions of Nigeria is common and the BAY regions of Nigeria continue to be dangerous.

#### ***3.4.1 What is an IDP?***

Akintunde et al. (2020, p.2) define internally displaced persons as “people or groups of people forced to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, particularly as a result of or in order to avoid natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border”. The focal points within this definition are “obliged to flee” and “human-made disasters”; these points define those who have been displaced by Boko Haram in northern Nigeria. Specifically, they have

been forced to leave their homes within their towns and villages (places of habitual residence). Many of them have moved to safer cities in Nigeria, and others have crossed into neighbouring countries Chad, Cameroon, and Niger (Emmanuelar, 2015). Since 2009, more than 2 million people have been forced to leave their homes due to the insurgency and the counterinsurgency force (Kamta et al., 2020). Bertoni et al. (2019, p.3) note that the insurgency and the rise of Boko Haram have led to a “forced displacement crisis” and that it has only strengthened the inequalities between the North and the South, particularly leaving the North economically vulnerable. They claim that the states most affected by displacement are the BAY regions. In a study based on six states in the north of Nigeria (Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, Bauchi, Gombe, and Taraba), it was found that 85.68% of those who have been displaced left because of Boko Haram (Raji et al., 2021). In accordance with Kamta et al. (2020), Raji et al. (2021, p.1) exposed that the number of those who were displaced by Boko Haram from their homes reached 1.8 million.

Mustapha said that there are IDP camps and host communities. He asserted that an IDP is given the internally displaced label once they have been identified by an organisation that conducts CCM, which is “camp management outcome and coordination management”<sup>29</sup>. He claimed that once people have been identified, that is when their needs begin to be recognised and they become categorised as an IDP. Host communities are different because they started when there were no programmes in place to accommodate displaced people. Now, when people in host communities see those in the IDP camps, they have no intention or interest in joining them either, as they can see that the camps are “deprived, isolated, and places where people are not enjoying their basic rights”<sup>30</sup>.

Kamta et al. (2020) interviewed 204 IDPs in the northeast of Nigeria between rural areas and Maiduguri. They found that the main reason for having to migrate was due to the insurgency, other reasons included water scarcity and land desertification. Ishaya

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<sup>29</sup> “Normally those internally displaced persons, they are called internally displaced when they are identified by organisations conducting CCM.” (Mustapha, 2022)

<sup>30</sup> “People at the host community, don’t have themselves interested to go to the IDP camps because they are seeing that people in the IDP camps are deprived, isolated, they don’t enjoy some of their basic rights.” (Mustapha, 2022)

claimed that the reason that most people from rural areas choose to go to cities is that they are more protected by the government than small villages and rural areas. He claimed that some villages are left without police officers and are extremely vulnerable to extremists<sup>31</sup>. Kanko agreed that people flee to the city because they perceive cities as places that are more protected and offer more support to people. Patience and her family, for example, were displaced from their village due to an insurgent attack and decided to flee to Maiduguri.

The interviewees described that many displaced people who have left their homes now reside in IDP camps, which are areas created by national and local governments, people and organisations. These camps are designed to act as a safe space and accommodate those who have nowhere else to go. Often organisations provide food and soap there, and they regularly become small slums or mini towns. Raji et al. (2020, p.2) agree that most head toward the city of Maiduguri, but rather than feeling safe and protected, they end up “crammed together” in the camps. Emmanuelar (2015) argues that the Nigerian government is failing to protect its displaced citizens when it comes to providing them with food, shelter and support in rehabilitation. He claims that the insurgency fuelled the numbers of those needing this protection and that pressure has been placed on the camps that exist, leaving them overwhelmed and unable to support everybody.

In 2021, according to Ishaya, the government told all IDPs that it was safe to return to their villages, that they would be offered more protection and be able to rebuild their livelihoods<sup>32</sup>. He expressed that many were wary of this and decided not to return due to fear and the certainty that their work and livelihoods were already destroyed. Kamta et al. (2020) discuss the fact that although the insurgency triggered most of the internal displacement, many actually learnt to live in conflict and only left once their work and source of income were interrupted. They noted that once families could no longer maintain themselves economically and access basic necessities, they felt there was nothing to hold onto and left. Many farmers in particular fear being attacked because much of the farmland has become hideout zones for insurgents. They are also targeted

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<sup>31</sup> “You will find particular communities with just a single police station and not enough officers for a large community, when there are Boko Haram attacks there are not enough police.” (Ishaya, 2022)

<sup>32</sup> “The government, I think last year around 2021 they made the IDPs return to their local government and communities I think but there are still some that refuse to go back.” (Ishaya, 2022)



when insurgents search for supplies, food and resources to provide for themselves (Kamta et al., 2020). Abubakar explained that Boko Haram will enter communities, sometimes only for a few minutes, with a specific target like a hospital, pharmacy, or market. He said that they will go in, take everything they need, such as medicine and food, instil fear in the village, and then run away<sup>33</sup>. They will take all the resources the village has, without thinking or taking care of the repercussions of this on the families and children who live there. If the residents tried to stop them, they would be killed or severely injured. Abubakar expressed that the insurgents have left towns empty, people starving and fear brewing; he said that only recently, some have told him that a kind of normality is returning<sup>34</sup>.

### ***3.4.2 The Intervention of Agencies and Organisations***

Raji et al. (2020) foreground the role that NEMA, the National Emergency Management Agency, has been assigned. This agency not only has a key role in supporting disaster management and the implementation of government policies but is also supposedly a key player in supporting the IDP crisis and ensuring that IDP rights are maintained. Raji et al. (2020) find that although NEMA is highly relied on, its operational capacity is limited and it cannot provide for the number of IDPs, especially in the Northeast.

Adeolu voices that due to the disruption caused by insurgents, many people are forced to flee their communities and hide<sup>35</sup>. Patience notes that when children leave their homes, they head to IDP camps and cannot attend school because they cannot afford them; they are obliged to beg and provide for themselves<sup>36</sup>. The reason many children have lost their parents is that during the attacks, they were forced to follow whoever they could and prioritise survival. Patience outlines the fact that some support from organisations exists within the camps. Yakin agrees that NGOs have been trying to offer

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<sup>33</sup> “The hospital they will go in and take all of the medicines they need and sometimes they will come to the markets and invade the markets and make everyone run away and take everything and then run away themselves.” (Abubakar, 2022)

<sup>34</sup> “So that fear is still there as of now when I went to assess them, how far the training is going, they were telling me that everything is getting normal now.” (Abubakar, 2022)

<sup>35</sup> “Looking at the insurgency because so many people are running away, looking for where to hide because of the nature of what is happening in the community.” (Adeolu, 2022)

<sup>36</sup> “Even the government school, those that are living on their own cannot afford even those in the IDP camps, they are struggling to get food they cannot afford.” (Patience, 2022)

support in IDP camps, but that the number of children and people is beyond imagination<sup>37</sup>. He expresses that the camps are extremely cramped and those who are able to obtain sufficient aid are limited. Yakin, however, also discusses that some of the people who have been helped by organisations are failing to utilise what they have been given; he says some are not putting enough effort into building a new life for their families and themselves<sup>38</sup>. He claims that they will be reluctant to try again in the name of the insurgency and terrorism, even though many still wait to receive the support that they themselves have obtained.

Kanko says that in 2021, there were 7 or 8 IDP camps in the Maiduguri metropolitan area and that NGOs would go there and provide food assistance and cash-based transfers. This involved giving people the money to go and buy food<sup>39</sup>. However, he claimed that many camps had been closed by the government and confirmed what Ishaya said about people being persuaded to head back towards their local areas. Kanko said that now NGOs must go to local locations instead, set up in a field or a secondary school, and begin their food assistance and cash-based transfers once more<sup>40</sup>. He explained that the organisation for which he works, the World Food Programme (WFP) (2023), goes to local areas monthly and provides assistance with crops and nutritional foods. The World Food Programme (2023) claims to be increasing its operations to reach 1.7 million people each month with food and cash transfers. It recognises that in the BAY regions, more than 3 million people have been displaced and 4.1 million people struggle with food insecurity (WFP, 2023). The World Food Programme (2023) released a report on the situation in Nigeria in September 2022. It claimed that humanitarian actors were struggling to access field locations and offer food supplies due to non-State armed groups on the roads and within northern areas. Due to these security issues and a lack of resources and funding, the WFP had to reduce its goal of 1.7 million people to 1.2 in the last quarter of 2022 (WFP, 2023). It still managed to support many

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<sup>37</sup> “The NGOs, they have been trying. There are a lot of IDP camps trying to support people but here you see the numbers of almajiri children too many and even if you go to IDP camps the number of people that are needing IDP camps is beyond imagination.” (Yakin, 2022)

<sup>38</sup> “Though the NGOs are giving support, some have failed to look at it like okay I have found support from NGOs and i need to utilise what i have to start something for myself.” (Yakin, 2022)

<sup>39</sup> “NGOs go there and provide food assistance, cash-based transfers where they give them money to go buy food.” (Kanko, 2022)

<sup>40</sup> “NGOs go there and visit the camps and those that are not in the camps they go and find a secondary school or big field location” (Kanko, 2022)

local farmers in the BAY regions with the use of USD cash transfers and reach thousands of newly displaced people trying to flee “hard-to-reach” areas (WFP, 2023).

### ***3.4.3 Youth Development and Education in IDP Camps***

Ogunode et al. (2022) argue that IDP children are not receiving adequate education due to the situations they face. They say that the problem is due to a lack of resources, teachers, funding, infrastructure, and school materials. Their solution requires local and national authorities to create a “special funding programme” that fuels the education of children in IDP camps (Ogunode et al., 2022, p.14). Along with this, they say that there should be an effective way to monitor the implementation of this programme and the distribution of funds. This Day (2022) noted that the federal government made a promise to displaced children in Nigeria that by 2023 they would ensure that they were offered adequate education and placed in schools with equal opportunities for secondary and higher education. Principle 23 of the “Guiding Principles of the United Nations on Internal Displacement” reaffirms the right of all human beings to access education and specifically that children subject to displacement should receive free and compulsory primary education from authorities (UNHCR, 2023). Principle 23(4) highlights that IDPs should have access to educational and training facilities, with a focus on adolescents and women, whether they live in camps or not (UNHCR, 2023, p.24).

Auwal emphasises the idea of training facilities and more support in acquiring specific skills that can help a child become self-sufficient in the future<sup>41</sup>. He brought to attention the fact that many internally displaced children lose motivation for education and that due to the early age at which they were displaced, some have never had the opportunity to go to school in their villages. He claimed that some of the older children went to school before being displaced, but now associate school with insurgency and danger. Auwal emphasised the fact that awareness of education and what it can offer is crucial. With his job, Auwal goes to IDP camps and teaches children the importance of learning skills and having the motivation to become self-reliant and independent entrepreneurs.

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<sup>41</sup> “*I teach them that they can be self-reliant by themselves when they take the skills they can make in life.*” (Auwal, 2022)

Patience says that displaced children mostly do not have access to schools within the camps, they must go to public primary schools. She says that most of them cannot afford to go or do not prioritise education, and therefore, they spend their days playing instead. She voices that although the government schools should technically be free, they are not and the IDP children can barely obtain food, let alone an education<sup>42</sup>. This further demonstrates that the promises by the federal government to ensure that all displaced children are in free and compulsory education are currently not being complied with. Higazi (2016, p.105) confirms that “IDP camps are not conducive to educational development”; he says that there are not only many security problems within the camps but that many IDPs are also traumatised by what they have seen. He adds that although the presence of NGOs is making some difference, there are insufficient resources available to support the number of children. Evoh (2016) claims that even before Boko Haram, the northeast of Nigeria was behind in terms of education. However, he emphasises that after Boko Haram’s attacks on education, this has become more problematic, reducing school attendance rates to around 3-8%, and preventing children from becoming literate or acquiring numerical skills. Evoh (2016) concludes his article by foregrounding the idea that education for IDP children is an essential step in the reintegration and recovery process of northeast Nigeria. He highlights the need for trained instructors to be hired in replacement of the school staff that have been displaced. He also declares that schools being rebuilt in cities such as Maiduguri need extra support to meet the number of children in need.

### ***Conclusion***

In conclusion, the number of people who have been displaced in northern Nigeria reaches more than 2 million, most of whom had to leave due to the extremist group Boko Haram and the terror, destruction and fear they have instilled in many rural areas. Initially, Boko Haram was impacting large cities like Maiduguri in Borno state, where their original headquarters was. However, since the presidency under Muhammadu Buhari, they have been pushed into rural areas. Those who were already poorer and had struggled to access education before are now even more impacted. Many of the

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<sup>42</sup> “It is not just free the way it sounds, like government school, you have to still pay something to enter the school.” (Patience, 2022)

interviewees confirmed that the children within IDP camps have not been attending school and have received insufficient support due to the unlimited number of them. People who work for various organisations, including Kanko and Auwal, have been working to provide food assistance, training, and awareness of education. In terms of youth and their schooling, this section exposed a gap between the promises made by the government and the reality seen by the interviewees. Evidently, children in IDP camps are not in school and are not being offered any support in building skills for their future. The education section also brushed upon the UN Guiding Principles which represent some of the obligations that the authorities have not been able to comply with. Most of the scholars and interviewees suggest that more funding be allocated to education and skill training and that schools be given the capacity and staff to rebuild and cope with the number of children currently out of school.

### **3.5 Discussing Youth Unemployment**

This section aims to expose a significant playing factor in the situation youth face in the northeast of Nigeria. Although the excessive number of out-of-school children is often focused on, it is essential to notice that those who have been to school and have even completed tertiary studies are also struggling. This is due to the lack of employment opportunities available in Nigeria as a whole, especially in the North. This number of unemployed youth is significant, they represent highly intelligent individuals who could offer potential and help fuel the advancement of Nigeria. However, they end up stuck and unable to use their diplomas. Several of the interviewees commented on this issue, particularly Yakin, who has recently graduated from university and feels frustrated with the lack of opportunities he is presented with. Usman (2015, p.94) notes that many educated graduates no longer see the relevance of education or realise the opportunities that education should provide. This is because the system failed to provide them with jobs.

Nigeria uses the International Labour Organisation's definition of "unemployment", which means that "you are unemployed if you did absolutely nothing at all or did something but for less than 20 hours during the reference week" (NBS, 2020). They

also use the definition of underemployment, which is when a person works less than 40 full-time hours a week, but more than 20, or works a job that does not use their “skills, time, and educational qualifications” (NBS, 2020). In the Nigerian context, it is a struggle in the North to find employment, especially employment that correlates with the studies that a graduate has completed. The National Bureau of Statistics (2020) found that the largest age grouping of the active working-age population is those between the ages of 15 and 24. They found that the underemployment rate in 2020 for Nigeria was 30.5%, and the unemployment rate was 40.8%. Almost half of the people who did not attend primary school (46.2%) remain unemployed once they have reached the age of active employment (NBS, 2020). These results are alarming given that the number of children unable to attend primary school in the northeast of Nigeria due to insurgency, floods, poverty and lack of resources is significant. Getting these children to school should increase their chances of employment in the future. However, what this section aims to highlight is that educational attainment is not always helping youth in the North obtain employment. This will be shown to be mainly due to the lack of government support and the lack of opportunities in the private sector.

### ***3.5.1 The Employment Structure in Nigeria***

Many of the interviewees explained that being employed in Nigeria usually means having a “government job”<sup>43</sup>. They clarified that the government controls most of the employment opportunities and all job sectors are mainly government-provided functions. Kanko explained that Nigeria has not been able to develop its private sector like most advanced countries, as this is prevented by the lack of resources and the control that the government has over employment<sup>44</sup>. The private sector has become even more limited by the insurgency, as many international investors do not see the potential to invest in a country with high insecurity and corruption.

Okafor (2011, p.361) defines youth unemployment as a “conglomerate of youths with diverse backgrounds, willing and able to work, but cannot find any”. He claims that

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<sup>43</sup> “The jobs are saturated especially government jobs, it’s complicated, it’s about who you know.” (Kanko, 2022)

<sup>44</sup> “You know in your country you have power, good electricity, so the private sector thrives and gives opportunities to almost everyone but here, unfortunately, we lack that.” (Kanko, 2022)

every year thousands of new graduates enter the search for a job in a country where there are no job opportunities. He captures the fact that even as a self-employed person, the infrastructure and wider issues impact their ability to trade and be financially stable. Auwal explained that in the Northeast there are too many young people who are jobless; he says that the government does not have anything to offer them because of the size of the population<sup>45</sup>. Furthermore, he declares that there are no more companies in the Northeast, and claims that Yobe state has an extremely high number of graduates. They need some support from organisations and some opportunities to replace what the government cannot provide. Auwal says that what the State needs is for entrepreneurs to see this potential and support the development and funding of their industry. This would create jobs that do not rely on the government and allow Yobe state more occasions to thrive.

### ***3.5.2 Linking Unemployment to the Insurgency***

Raji et al. (2021) note that one of the causal factors for the survival of Boko Haram is the high rate of youth unemployment. Auwal emphasises the damaging effects felt by a lack of jobs and Adeolu describes how unemployment makes young people vulnerable to peer pressure<sup>46</sup>. He claims that because there is no employment, groups of youth are more likely to become involved in other settings. Specifically, he speaks of the tendency for some of the lost youth to go towards terrorism, resulting in seriously impacting communities. Okafor (2011) agrees that if the youth are not being offered jobs, then who is to say that they will not get involved in destabilising activities? Adenyi and Dare (2019, p178) also point this out in their chapter on youth employability; Boko Haram “take advantage of the underemployment situation to recruit naive and poor youths without jobs or hope of survival”. However, this is a point of view that many of the interviewees also want to disassociate with the employment crisis. For people like

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<sup>45</sup> “The problems the youth are facing here is that there is too much of jobless, every year you see graduates at the end and then unemployment is there, there is no any more company in the Northeast. Secondly, problem of the youths, majority of the youths that not rely on their state or the government, the government don’t have anything to give them because of the highest population.” (Auwal, 2022)

<sup>46</sup> “You are graduate but yet there is no work to do, so for that reason peer groups will push them into terrorism which will serious affect the particular community.” (Adeolu. 2022)

Yakin, who has graduated and is desperately looking for a job opportunity, viewing him as someone who is vulnerable to terrorist recruitment is problematic.

Usman (2015) noted that the number of unemployed affects peace and stability in Nigeria and that it is the youth who will resort to criminal behaviour. He brings back the link between terrorism, the divides between the North and the South, and the inefficiency of governing figures. Usman (2015) claims that Boko Haram is a product of poverty and unemployment and that even before the existence of the group, most of the population remained below the poverty line. He blames the political leaders for the poor management of the resources that should make Nigeria rich. From the discussions with the interviewees, it is evident that even if poverty levels were significant before the Boko Haram crisis, they have only worsened since then. Territories are destroyed and controlled by the group, and people cannot survive financially, socially, or economically.

Kanko emphasised the importance of supporting youth; he looks at the situation from the other side of Usman's (2015) argument. He confirms that although Boko Haram may be a product of poverty, it also increases and fuels it further. Patience claims that some of the youth want to continue their education but do not have the money; therefore, they resort to various crimes as fast ways of obtaining money. She says that it is the lack of things to do and the lack of hope that leads young people to participate in crimes like this. During the pandemic in particular, Patience described the youth as simply sitting around and fuelling each other to go out at night and commit crimes, attack people, and break into houses. The reason for the number of people struggling with unemployment and lack of direction is that they had to abandon everything, hide in the bush, and leave their communities, their farms, and their homes. Ohwofasa and Aiyedogbon (2012, p.271) claim that considering the human and physical resources that have been dedicated to poverty in Nigeria, the fact that the levels are still so high is a "paradox" and "disturbing". This rise in poverty is caused by many factors, including poor governance, insurgency, floods, loss of livelihoods, and mass displacement. However, the rise is also driven by the level of unemployment and the continuous growth in unemployment rates.



### 3.5.3 State Action

Isokpan and Durojaye (2016) claim that as part of the government's strategy to address social and economic issues, they need to pay attention to the level of unemployment in the North. Usman (2015) agrees and emphasises that as a matter of urgency, the federal and local governments must implement programmes and policies that open job opportunities and support young people, their education, literacy and skill development. He mentions a couple of attempts by the government, including the introduction of the almajiri school programme, which, if successful, could “reorient” children in the North and reduce their “vulnerability to being brainwashed” (Usman, 2015, p.98). Mustapha mentioned the BESTA programme, which was introduced by the government and aims to integrate Western education into almajiri schools<sup>47</sup>. He outlined the programme's limitations, that it was only run within schools for short periods of time, four to five months. Mustapha claimed that BESTA was aimed at identifying the number of children who do not go to school and addressing that number. The government's goal was to further support youth development; however, Mustapha explained that the BESTA programme was not implemented in the correct way<sup>48</sup>. He declared that programmes like this could strengthen local communities if developed by the right people, but that “systemic corruption has eaten so deeply”.

Kayode et al. (2014) discuss the worrying rise in unemployment that seems to be unstoppable due to insufficient response from the government or any actors in the public and private sectors. They claim that both sectors are corrupted and that agricultural potential is being neglected. Referring to Auwal’s emphasis on entrepreneurship and the private sector, he brought to our attention the potential to farm in Adamawa state<sup>49</sup>. He argued that if entrepreneurs and the private sector were able to thrive, then the farming industry in Adamawa would thrive as well. He spoke of

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<sup>47</sup> “In the first quarter of the year 2022, government here in the state launched a BESTA programme which is a programme to address children out of school by bringing them on board, identifying them, registering them to a school nearby.” (Mustapha, 2022)

<sup>48</sup> “The programme is no longer going on due to the fact that the children that are enrolled in school, the very committee that was given the role to bring out the names, are the same people that are adding people that are mock names.” (Mustapha, 2022)

<sup>49</sup> “In Adamawa state we have farming, the soil is good and fertile and anything you plant will grow.” (Auwal, 2022)

capacity, land, and fertile soils. Yakin also highlighted the millions of graduates on the ground who could be given jobs in agriculture if there was more room for “foreign entry” and foreign investment in Nigeria<sup>50</sup>. He claimed that it would not be bad for the government, but that government policies often fail due to “selfish desire”. In his opinion, the State is not doing enough to allow and ease the entrance of foreign companies and investors into the country.

Nina agreed with Auwal and Yakin that the North has the potential for agriculture and that if the government could provide the equipment, that agriculture could be used to create job opportunities<sup>51</sup>. It is also important to note that the farms themselves and the livelihoods of the northern Nigerian population are not protected during the insurgency and floods. Therefore, not only can it be observed that the government is not helping fuel the growth of the farming industry, but it is also not supporting those already within it. Specifically, those who are currently losing their farms and livelihoods every day due to external factors and insurgents that enter their communities. As seen, if not destroyed, the farms are exploited by the insurgents to meet their food requirements and needs.

### ***Conclusion***

Salami (2013), along with many of the interviewees, emphasises the importance of young people in the country. They are described as the future and the key to a better tomorrow. If the youth are restricted from progressing, then the country is also prevented from progressing. This section outlined the various challenges facing unemployed youth in northern Nigeria. It exposed data on the unemployment rate reported by the National Bureau of Statistics (2020) and matched these data to the situations that interviewees can see on the ground. Auwal, Nina, and Yakin in particular highlighted the potential of the farming industry if it were to receive more external funding and support. The interviewees also outlined the fact that the State has not been able to find a solution for the constant rise in unemployment and that the political

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<sup>50</sup> “So, I think if the government can look for those opportunities where a foreign member state comes into the company and helps the citizens of the country with no harm, I think it will be more beneficial and help us to move in progress.” (Yakin, 2022)

<sup>51</sup> “I think here in the North one of the biggest things is farming, so if the government could provide equipment, then they can use farming to create job opportunities for the unemployed.” (Nina, 2022)

leaders and governing figures play a part in a corrupt system. Several of the interviewees spoke of the struggle they face to obtain or find a job and others spoke of their concerns as current students that they will not be able to find employment after graduation. The unemployment problem is something that needs to be seriously addressed by the State, along with what many of the interviewees agree is the main root cause: the insurgency.

### 3.6 Empirical Research Conclusion

One of the last questions asked at the end of each interview was how the interviewees would describe Nigeria and the challenges they face to someone who knew nothing about the country and the insurgency. Many of them began their answer to this by highlighting the fact that Nigeria is blessed with incredible natural and human resources. They continued to explain that the potential of these resources is being wrongly used. In terms of natural resources, the decisions are being made by those in power, and the returns that these resources could provide to the population are poorly managed and poorly distributed. Adeolu described the Nigerian population as “vibrant brilliant people”<sup>52</sup>, claiming that although Nigeria is rich in mineral resources, the leadership is “not faithful to their work”. He discussed the idea that those who implement the law need to be able to comply with that law. This is why Adeolu thinks his country is corrupt, he says that the leaders act in their own interests and that those who make the rules also break them.

Yakin claimed that he would explain the disturbance caused by the insecurities in Nigeria and the life changes that must be made in order to live through such situations and keep oneself safe<sup>53</sup>. He foregrounded the fact that you must know how to live in these conditions in order to remain unharmed. Job insecurity contributes to this; Yakin said that people in Nigeria must know how to make something of themselves and how

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<sup>52</sup> “Nigeria is a land which is blessed with lots of resources, why because we have a lot of vibrant brilliant people, enough mineral resources, a lot of things that we have been blessed from god but because of the nature of the leadership, some of the leaders they are not faithful to their work and some of the citizens are not following the laws. You give law and execution of that law is the problem.” (Adeolu, 2022)

<sup>53</sup> “I would explain that what is disturbing people is insecurity, about job insecurity. After telling him its great i would give light about insecurity and say that you have to know how to live yourself so you cannot be harmed.” (Yakin, 2022)

not to depend on the government. He described the population and business aspects as “good” but ruined by the insurgency and government failure.

Another of the last questions asked the interviewees what they think needs to be done to change the situation in Nigeria. Mustapha said that government officials should be accountable to the affected people. He said that their needs and age should be identified, reports should be created on these people, and information and solutions should be offered to them. He emphasised the idea that officials should not try to build expectations, but rather become more aware of the demographics of those struggles in order to begin implementing changes and strategies<sup>54</sup>. The main answers to what needs to be done to make a change can be divided into the following categories: More security, more education/training, more employment opportunities, and returning to the root cause.

#### More Security:

- Ishaya - *“I think that in metropolitan areas more security and the number of security officers needs to increase because, in the outskirts of cities and other local government areas, there is not much security.”*
- Patience - *“I think the security should be more because before you could not move without being attacked because there were no securities on ground, but now there are more so when there is more security, I think it will be okay.”*
- Kanko - *“The primary goal of the government should be to protect their citizens, provide a better environment, enough jobs, enough security, and mentorship programmes.”*

#### More Education and Training:

- Ishaya - *“The northern region as a whole needs more schools and to employ more teachers.”*
- Nina - *“We need to create more industries and more places for the youth to be able to get the necessary knowledge and I think self-reliance and other things.”*

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<sup>54</sup> *“I would meet them, identify their needs, identify their age, try not to build expectations, have the record and the information and inform them clearly where I can afford to provide their basic needs as identified.”* (Mustapha, 2022)

- Patience - *“If the government would be able to provide food for them and then school they shouldn't need to pay anything, even their uniforms should be provided, their books, they would go to school if they could eat.”*
- Mustapha - *“What is important is to come up with a response by coordinating a kind of platform where community leaders, religious leaders go to the schools identifying how many children are there and how many are out of school, those out of school should be reregistered, [...] we can see the children not attending school and the parents not caring about it, this is one penfold that we cannot blindeye from.”*

#### More Employment:

- Ishaya - *“The federal government needs to open a kind of directory that will look into the unemployment state and applicants because there are a lot of organisations that need manpower, but I don't know if it's that the don't have the money to pay more people or they just don't want to employ the applicants I don't know.”*
- Yakin - *“Well, we have millions of graduates on ground so it's only when they create that room for foreign entry into the country in order to bring development to the country and if they will give more ideas of farming and agriculture and other businesses that will be able to cater for the youth of the country. I think it will help, it will not be bad for the government, and policies the government sometimes fail to do because of policies and selfish desire.”*
- Nina - *“Here in the North one of the biggest things is farming, so if the government could provide equipment, then they can use farming to create job opportunities for the unemployed.”*

#### Returning to the Root Cause:

- Kanko - *“To solve the problem, you have to go to the root cause, starting with the radicalisation, what the Islamic schools are teaching, and how some of the children have become brainwashed.”*

When these aspects are brought together, the solutions that have been provided, it can be noted that the issues at hand are caused by Boko Haram and the insurgency, but are also linked to a lack of efficiency from the government. The government is not implementing strategies that will adequately help Nigerian citizens. The BESTA programme, for example, which Mustapha mentioned, was created with the aim of getting more children to school; this programme failed. Kanko said that “everything comes back to the government because they are not doing enough”. Not only are they not doing enough to get children into schools and increase employment opportunities, but the interviewees also highlighted the fact that they are corrupt. Adeolu claimed that “Nigeria is like this because we have not changed our mindset”. Instead of focussing on people, there are power dynamics that privilege the richer population and the governing figures. Everything is more accessible to those with connections and those with funds. Therefore, at the other end of the spectrum, the poorest parts of the population are the most impacted by a lack of opportunities and less security from insurgents and rebel groups.

## CHAPTER 4 - COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

By focussing solely on the theoretical framework of this paper and ignoring the findings of the empirical research, the reality of the situation in northeastern Nigeria and the answers to the research questions would not be fully understood. This chapter will compare the findings of chapters 1 and 2 of this research: the theoretical framework and the data and law chapters, to Chapter 3: the empirical research section and analysis of the discussions with the interviewees. By linking and evaluating the findings of these chapters, the two research questions will be brought under the spotlight.

1. What are the root causes of Boko Haram and what fuels its existence?
2. Who are the main groups of youth affected by the Boko Haram insurgency in the BAY regions?

It is essential to note that although this analysis outlines the youth groups most affected by the insurgency, everyone, in the northeast of Nigeria, has been affected. No matter their age, place of residence, social status, religion, or class. The BAY regions have been toxified by the existence of Boko Haram. Of course, the concept of intersectionality is important here, as one recognises the fact that some of the population are more affected than others. For example, the villages are more vulnerable than the cities, which have various implemented forms of security; and the poorer population is at a larger threat than the richer population. However, overall, the insurgency is holding the northeast of Nigeria back, is fuelling the insecurities and challenges they face, and restricting the population of the BAY regions from being free, safe, and fearless.

Firstly, this chapter will discuss question number one; it will outline the various reasons and causes for the rise of Boko Haram. It will discuss the factors that are rooted behind their creation, but also the fuel that helps them continue to recruit and survive. It is interesting to note that some of the divides and issues that led to the creation of Boko Haram are in fact being worsened and charged further by the group itself. Secondly, the chapter will move on to the impacted youth and the interruptions and challenges that younger generations continue to face. It will outline the difference between the

representation of these groups within the literature and the way these groups are described and discussed by the interviewees.

#### **4.1 What are the root causes of Boko Haram and what fuels its existence?**

When assessing the root cause and the fuel that continues to power Boko Haram, there is a limitless amount of overlap. In one sense, it can be argued that poverty and unemployment led to the creation of Boko Haram; the economic insecurity felt in the North is not new and existed far before the arrival of these terrorists. However, this insecurity has now worsened due to the threat and destruction caused by this group on a regular basis. Therefore, in another sense, it appears that although poverty and unemployment may be some of the root causes of the group, the impact and existence of the insurgents have also worsened the problem. This analysis will return to the three branches of the theoretical review, “The Responsibility of the State, Education as a Sin, and Education at a Cost”, and link them to the first research question. In some cases, the root cause of Boko Haram is believed to come from the colonial past and the infiltration of the West imposed on Nigeria by the British. This includes the religious tensions that can be seen between Christianity and Islam, as well as the rigidity between different cultural tribes and dialects. It also includes the introduction of Western education into Nigerian society, which Boko Haram strongly disapproves of. Finally, the role of the State as a root cause, but also as a structure that has allowed Boko Haram to continue to commit horrific acts and survive. This section will look at these three angles, highlighting the link between the cause and ammunition, to pinpoint why Boko Haram exists and why they are still around 20 years later.

##### ***4.1.1 Colonisation and the West***

The literature demonstrated that the colonisation and structural reformation of Nigeria was something that the South adapted to but that the North struggled with. They perceived the interference of the West as a threat and could not comprehend why the Christians fell for it and allowed the colonists to influence and completely restructure Nigerian society. The North has felt somewhat disconnected from the developments that



are occurring in the South of the country. This disconnection has been partly on purpose and partly due to this threat felt by the Islamic leaders of the North who saw the South as being controlled and changed by the colonisers. As seen within the historical background, the first postcolonial experience of terrorism was not Boko Haram. Firstly, anger was ignited due to the oil boom in the 1970s when many groups started to commit acts of terror due to frustration connected to where the profits were going and the environmental impact (Del Felice and Onyeigwe, 2019). As seen, the British and the West were heavily involved in the exploitation of Nigeria's oil reserves and the manipulation of profits. Again, in the 1980s, terrorism impacted Nigeria with the Maitastine uprising. After the literature review and empirical research, it can be confirmed that Boko Haram seems to have the same anger toward the West as the Maitastine group did. Both groups formed an anti-Western branch of Islam based on Sharia law, which puts at risk anyone who disapproves. Like the Maitastine Uprising, foreign influence is disapproved of by Boko Haram; they perceive the West and all related to the West as an imposition. The importance of this root and this historical relationship that played a role in the creation of Boko Haram is an essential component of this analysis.

Both the interviewees and the literature highlighted this link, and Kanko claimed that noticing colonisation as a root cause is the first step in dismantling the current structure and reforming Nigeria. Kanko connected the historical roots of Nigeria to the insurgents and the beginning of radicalisation; he specified that to fix Nigeria, those who have been radicalised must be deradicalised<sup>55</sup>. The involvement of the West and specifically the British cannot be ignored when looking back to the formation of Boko Haram and the initial actions of Mohammed Yusuf when he created the group. Today, hatred towards the West persists and Western-influenced schools in the Northeast remain at risk. In an analysis of the information that the literature and interviewees provided, it is evident that although the continuation of Boko Haram may not appear directly related to the colonial era, the imposition of the West and the threat they have posed to the northern regions has led to the current dynamics. For example, as seen during the

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<sup>55</sup> “So, the problem didn't start today, it started a long long time ago. And that is why to solve this, you have to start from the basics and fundamentals. It has to be those radicalised, they have to be deradicalised and that would take a god of miracles.” (Kanko, 2022)

research, the almajiri schools were banned by the colonisers and then continued to be banned under Christian rule. Today, the number of almajiri children on the streets is problematic, but the State continuing to ban the system has only further fuelled anger and frustration as the State fails to offer them support.

Furthermore, Kanko also noted that many Muslims, including his neighbours, are still wary of Western education and perceive it as something strange<sup>56</sup>. He claimed that once the terrorist groups began to attack Western education, many families said that safety was their reason for not putting their children in school. The interviewees foreground this reluctance toward Western education that is not connected to extremist support but rather feelings of unease towards a culture that differs from their own<sup>57</sup>. This ideology links back to the arrival of the British and the imposition they caused in the North, where the population struggled more than the South to understand these new ways of life. An important note to make is that one can be Muslim but still recognise the benefits that Western education can provide, and understand that it does not aim to interfere with one's personal religious choices. However, it can be understood, when looking at the past and the conflict between Christianity and Islam, why many Muslims may see this as Christians trying to dominate.

#### ***4.1.2 Education as a Tool: Combining the Cost and the Sin***

In the theoretical review, there were three branches: education at a cost, education as a sin, and the responsibility of the State. Education at a cost or as a sin are perceptions that have been reviewed during the empirical analysis. Some of the costs and risks related to going to school discussed in the theory also became relevant in the interviews. For example, the presence of security in schools will be examined in this section. “Education as a tool” not only defines the idea that education is used as an instrument by Boko Haram during their destructive acts and aims, but it also reflects the fact that

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<sup>56</sup> “I remember when I was growing up, a couple of Muslims around me they didn't like going to school, so they see this Western education as states of the infidel as a strange thing to them. So added to that when the terrorist groups started coming, they used that as a yardstick, brainwashed some people and said okay these white people they are not part of us, they are infidel, don't follow their way of life.” (Kanko, 2022)

<sup>57</sup> “Well because of the understanding, the negative understanding their parents have that Western education are mainly for Christian believers.” (Mustapha, 2022)

education is the key to future success and youth development in Nigeria. If children in northern Nigeria could further see the opportunities and potential that having an education offers, they may be more inclined to attend. The low attendance at schools in the Northeast, as seen within the review and data collection, shows that many children end up roaming the streets with no sense of direction, beginning to commit small-scale crimes out of boredom and dissatisfaction. Many would like to attend school if they could afford it or if the threat of insecurity was not so high; others, are not interested in going and do not see the advantages that education can bring to their future. Furthermore, Adeolu and Yakin discussed how some parents cannot afford their children's education, Peil (1990) also touched on this in her 1990 article. She noted that the cost of schooling was restricting some children from accessing opportunities. Taiwo (2013) expressed that during the mid-insurgency era, those struggling financially in the Northeast could not put their children in school and were facing a lack of support from the State. This analysis shows that before as well as now during the insurgency, people living in poverty struggle to educate their children at school. It can be deduced that this has only gotten worse since the uprising of Boko Haram and the growth of economic insecurities in Nigeria.

There is a sense of anxiety that arises when talking about the catch between trying to put children in schools and give them a future, and the fact that schools are danger zones in the North and often targeted by extremism. They are danger zones because, as seen, Boko Haram perceives those in Western education as infidels and minions of the West. This perception that Western education is sinful or forbidden is one of the tools in the group's fight against the current system in Nigeria. By targeting schools, the State still sees Boko Haram, their presence is felt by the population, and the fear of not complying with their rules remains existent. As long as this fear is felt, Boko Haram will continue to hold some form of power in Nigeria, or at least they will believe that they withhold some power.

Having spoken to a group of people of various ages who attended school in northeastern Nigeria at different times during the past 20 years of the insurgency, information was provided on their feelings towards education. It is evident that each of the interviewees

recognises the importance of education and how it can help young people develop. The interviewees also made it clear that even when their studies were interrupted, due to attacks on their schools or because the threat level was high, they persisted until the end of their studies when possible<sup>58</sup>. The aim of Boko Haram when attacking a school is clear: they do not want people to learn any form of curriculum that does not match their beliefs. Although their biggest issue is Western education, they have not only targeted Western-influenced schools but also Islamic institutions. Everyone is at risk in the eyes of Boko Haram and the lack of reluctance they portray when committing dehumanising actions seems far too easy for them. The intentions of Boko Haram are deadly, and their final goal is unclear and confusing. In summary, Western education should be recognised as one of the main root causes of Boko Haram. Partly due to what the term “Boko Haram” means and secondly due to Yusuf’s attempts to persuade people that this modern form of Western education was an infiltration and poison from the West, from colonisers.

As long as Western education exists in the North, it acts as fuel for the insurgents. However, if this form of education does not exist, then the impact is also destructive to Nigeria. This is evident when looking at those not attending Western education in the Northeast: these being the almajiri children and children not in schools. When looking at children who do not have access to education and Western education, many of them can be found on the streets, illiterate, and fending for themselves. These children live in struggle, begging, hawking, and doing whatever they can to get food and money. Although some of the almajiri children study Islamic education due to their beliefs, the number of children is too high for their Mallams to provide for them. The almajiri system used to be funded by the State and was neglected in the post-colonisation era, and again recently when almajiri schools became banned. They used to also be funded by the community; however, over time as poverty and insecurity have grown, this has become less possible.

The almajiri school system is strongly embedded in the north of Nigeria and has existed since before colonisation. After discussing the almajiri system during the review and

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<sup>58</sup> “*The exam was in the morning, and they attacked the night before, but the exam still went ahead.*” Ishaya (2022)

interviews, it is evident that it could be more successful if it allowed for the integration of some Western education. In tsangayas, education is limited to the revision of the Quran and the learning of Arabic. The children in these schools are not taught about hygiene or compulsory topics in Western education such as maths, science, English, geography, etc<sup>59</sup>. It could be argued that if Mallams continued their Islamic teachings but were more flexible to allow children to learn other skills at the same time, then these children would be less aimless when they finished their Islamic education.

Furthermore, the theoretical framework discussed that the presence of security in schools and institutions was problematic as it normalised the presence of weapons and militants (Verjee and Kwala, 2021). Many of the interviewees talked about the presence of security in their schools, such as Nina, who works at the University of Maiduguri, and Ishaya, who attended the university as a student<sup>60</sup>. Nina spoke of the need for a student and staff ID card to enter the building and other security measures that have been implemented<sup>61</sup>. None of the interviewees mentioned feeling intimidated or threatened by the sight or presence of officers or weapons. In fact, many of the interviewees agreed that school security is one of the only functioning initiatives of the State in the fight against Boko Haram. When asked what the government has done to support the population during the insurgency, introducing security at schools and in the cities was one of the primary responses<sup>62</sup>. The only problems that the interviewees highlighted with the security forces were that there are not enough of them and that they should also be extended to rural areas and villages. Adeolu also mentioned that at times the security forces arrive too late and are not aware of the attack until after it has taken place<sup>63</sup>. This contrasts with the literature whereby Verjee and Kwala (2021) spoke of being forced to accept the security officers, rather than being comforted by their presence. Although it may feel like children have to normalise militants, this seems better than living under the fear of no protection with no security surrounding them.

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<sup>59</sup> “If sometimes you go to tsangaya schools, you’re not taught things like hygiene promotion, how to clean their bodies or any Western education.” (Auwal, 2022)

<sup>60</sup> “They tried to enter the university, but they couldn’t because the security forces are getting better.” (Ishaya, 2022)

<sup>61</sup> “We the staff have our own security and our own entrance and exit [...] before you go in you have to show your ID.” (Nina, 2022)

<sup>62</sup> “The government have tried their best to provide security for the community.” (Adeolu, 2022)

<sup>63</sup> “The other challenges we are facing is that mostly the security they won’t be aware until the terrorists have already carried out their own assignment and then the security will come out after.” (Adeolu, 2022)

There is a middle ground that needs to be discovered here between offering children their right to safety and considering the impact and pressure of feeling constantly in need of protection. However, it is also important to note that schools with security presence can lead a more ‘normal’ life and a better quality of education; whereas, those in villages with unprotected or even destroyed schools remain very exposed to the threat of insurgents.

In a discussion with the interviewees, Ishaya mentioned that cities are struggling economically, but that it is the villages that are still being attacked by insurgents<sup>64</sup>. He developed on the fact that there are not enough security or police officers in rural areas. Abubakar explained that the villages are very neglected. Comparing this to the theoretical review, Aghedo and Osumah (2012) agreed that cities feel safer and more protected than the countryside. It is evident from both ends of this research that rural areas are the most vulnerable to Boko Haram; they are the places where the group can thrive in recent times. The villages are also places that the extremist group can easily access to collect their necessities such as food and medicine. Having this power in more hidden areas allows them to continue to survive. It is part of their fuel, and the failure of the State to implement more security measures in rural areas is a sign that it is not succeeding in dismantling Boko Haram.

The divide between the villages and the cities during this research became evident. Although many of the interviewees themselves came from rural areas and moved to the cities, they were rarely able to return home due to the insecurity on the roads and within the villages themselves. This must also play a psychological role in the lives of the interviewees along with the many displaced people in Nigeria. This is because, in the case of IDPs, leaving one’s home without choice and without the option of returning poses significant challenges. The obstacles include the need to rebuild a livelihood, find a job, go to school, find a home, etc. If the move was not financially easy, they may struggle to leave IDP camps due to a lack of support from organisations or the State. The interviewees described the state of the camps and the circumstances under which

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<sup>64</sup> “*Those that are living in villages and communities not within the cities are still affected by the acts of the insurgents.*” (Ishaya, 2022)

displaced people are forced to survive<sup>65</sup>. The impact is not only psychological, but also financial and therefore, physical if they are struggling to access basic necessities and resources.

#### ***4.1.3 The Fault of the State?***

Compared to the angle discussed during the theoretical review “the Responsibility of the State”, it can be argued that part of the fuel of Boko Haram is in fact the fault of the State. According to the opinion of many scholars and the agreement of many of the interviewees, the State has failed to protect the citizens. This does not mean that the State has not implemented security measures in places like schools and universities; however, it means that the State has not been able to eliminate the group. There is also evidence that suggests that the Nigerian government has somewhat given up in the fight against Boko Haram, perhaps because the group is now mainly in rural areas and ‘unseen’. However, the group is very much seen by people whose communities are being destroyed, who cannot go to school, who live in poverty, who are being kidnapped, who are being forced to flee and become displaced.

Looking back to the research by Oluoha et al. (2020), there is no consistency by the State or the military; they have given up due to being underfunded and demotivated. This has reduced the trust of the public in the State. This distrust was evident in the discussions with the interviewees; many of them believe that it is the associations and the people who want to make the change. Some of the interviewees discussed initiatives that they have built and created to help youth development and people affected by the insurgency. However, their access to financial resources and support from the State is limited; they need interference from outside organisations or investment from the richer parts of the population or foreign investors. It could be argued that if the State paid more attention to the associations created by people wanting to help the population in the North, then they would be more successful in the elimination of the insurgents and in gaining the support of the people suffering because of terrorism. If the State was funding projects that were created by people on the ground who want to fuel education,

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<sup>65</sup> “The number of people that are needing IDP camps is beyond imagination, and they are becoming a cramped place.” (Yakin, 2022)

training, entrepreneurship, and youth development, then maybe the youth would have more faith that the government is on their side. The number of interviewees who were passionate about either being self-reliant entrepreneurs or founding associations to help northern Nigeria was high during this research. They recognise what is missing in their states and what needs to be done. The only issue is, that setting up for themselves is a struggle because of the lack of funds and the lack of State support systems. For example, Abubakar and his initiatives to help put more children in school and offer them opportunities. He has the passion and motivation but just needs some support to help more children and implement some of his ideas and strategies.

It is somewhat dangerous for the government to be perceived as fuelling the education that Boko Haram disapproves of so much. However, training in practical skills such as shoemaking, bricklaying, electrical work, and more, would help people become more self-reliant and perhaps slowly build some form of private sector in the North. Several interviewees, like Kanko, mentioned that the private sector is currently lacking in Nigeria. Mustapha spoke about creating a dialogue between community leaders, religious leaders, and the State<sup>66</sup>. He said that within the states, the political leaders should not interfere in projects based on getting children into schools but rather should listen to those who act in the best interest of the children and the people. If systems were implemented that allowed local leaders and human rights advocates to speak and assess each individual state's situation, then they could pitch their ideas for fixing the issues to the State and the governing structures. The community and religious leaders could act as mediators between the people and the State, and help implement strategies and change. It must be done in a way that offers people a voice and allows them to speak about their concerns and discuss how they can be resolved.

This process also needs to include all rural and urban areas and not exclude any parts of the Northeast. Those under the greatest threat from Boko Haram need this lack of safety to be confronted during their state and regional discussions. As mentioned above, their community leaders must communicate this to the governing structures so that they can access more security and improve communication paths. This is the work that Kanko

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<sup>66</sup> “*What is important is to come up with a response by coordinating on a kind of platform where community leaders, religious leaders have to be on one platform.*” (Mustapha, 2022)



helps carry out with the World Food Programme (2023); they install satellite systems and new means of communication between rural and urban areas. If these installations can help humanitarian workers and community leaders, then those in the villages can be offered a louder voice. The only issue that arises then is whether the State will listen and whether the new president, Bola Tinubu (Orjinmo, 2023), will care enough about issues that do not affect him or much of the population that support him. Will the people in the Northeast matter to him if he receives more information about them? The end of each attempt to help the Northeast comes back to the State; if the State cannot provide help, will it help the population obtain international support? Will they allow interference from external organisations? The State has the power to support positive change, use the media, communicate with the world, and bring about laws and policies; therefore, to help the population in need of aid, the State needs to act.

One of the main problems observed in this research is that the State is not on the side of those who are struggling. Even though some believe that they are, looking at the wider picture, their initiatives are failing and parts of their governing structure are corrupt. The theoretical review claimed that the previous president, Buhari, perceived Boko Haram as a threat to him rather than a threat to the people and youth who are under attack. Although the interviewees did not directly say this, it was evident that many of them were not seeing the help of the State. For example, Yakin had recently graduated and remained unemployed. To see people like Yakin who studied and graduated from university, who is motivated to help the future generations of Nigeria, left to his own resources and unable to find a job opportunity is a failure of the State. If the people who want to make a change, who are capable of doing something, are not supported by the State, then how can the country develop? How can younger generations have any hope? Another example is Patience who spoke out for those in her village who were unable to leave like her during the attacks; she said: “It’s like the government’s hands have not reached our village”<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> “It’s like the government’s hands have not reached our village.” (Patience, 2022)

#### ***4.1.4 Poverty and Unemployment***

There is a discussion to be had about the idea of whether Boko Haram is the root cause of poverty and unemployment or whether poverty and unemployment are the root causes of Boko Haram. There is a lot of overlap between these two perspectives. As seen in the theoretical review, Aghedo and Osumah (2012) claim that the insurgents exist as a reaction to economic conditions. However, during the empirical research, it became difficult to decipher which opinion ruled. Poverty and unemployment are linked in the sense that unemployment fuels poverty due to lacking a source of income. On the other hand, coming from a poorer background also reduces one's chances of employment. Many of the interviewees expressed the fact that to get a good job you need connections and money. Although this thesis outlined the fact that Mohammed Yusuf created Boko Haram as a response to the disapproval of Western Education, it was evidently also to do with the North being neglected during an important time of development in Nigeria. This neglect was fuelling poverty and unemployment in the North and therefore Yusuf associated it with the fault of the colonisers and the attempted breakdown of the Islamic schooling system. He created his own school and incited hatred against the State, against the Christians, against the West.

The literature explained that around the time of the colonisation of Nigeria, Nigerians were excluded from employment opportunities if they did not have the correct form of education (Peil, 1990). This is often the case when looking at colonisation, whereby the colonists would come from an industrialised economy and force their development stages and standards onto a country that had not yet reached that stage. This means that the inhabitants of the colonised country would not have the specific skills for the changes imposed by the colonists in terms of industrialisation and the exploitation of natural resources (Peil, 1990). Therefore, it can be assumed that unemployment was already an issue for some Nigerians before the existence of Boko Haram.

However, highlighted by the interviewees is the fact that before the insurgency, the North was rich in resources and traded products like fish and onions with the

neighbouring countries<sup>68</sup>. The agricultural sector in the North has incredible potential, and this potential has been damaged by the insurgency. The insurgency contributed to the destruction and exploitation of rural farms, the displacement of farmers who have had to leave their livelihoods, and the insertion of fear into farmers' lives. The farming industry has also been significantly affected by floods and climate disasters in the North. It seems evident that if funding was directed towards the farming industry and people were offered the opportunity to start again, they could begin to rebuild their livelihoods and help provide rural communities in the Northeast with a reliable food supply. The theoretical review investigated Hoechner's (2018) research on how rural areas struggle to access basic needs and that there are few to no employment opportunities or access to money there.

It becomes difficult to decipher whether unemployment was worsened by the insurgents, the colonists, or the State. It is evident that each of these actors plays a role in the situation. The colonisers deepened the divides in Nigeria and introduced industries that Nigerians, specifically in the North, were not used to. The State, since the independence of Nigeria, has not done enough to fix this problem. The State controls most of the employment opportunities but does not offer enough jobs for the number of people and the number of graduates. According to Kanko, the State also limits the private sector from thriving<sup>69</sup>. On the other hand, the insurgency limits foreign investment in Nigeria; people and companies are reluctant to set up or invest due to insecurity. The literature review highlighted Ayodele's (2022) remark that Boko Haram has scared international investors. Insurgents also contribute to unemployment because they literally destroy people's form of employment and livelihood, in terms of their farms, homes, and schools. The threat and fear that Boko Haram instils in communities restrict the potential of businesses, limits trade, and leaves businesses struggling to survive.

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<sup>68</sup> "Before the insurgency Maiduguri happened to be a commercial city, a commercial hope of northeastern Nigeria, because of productivity with the three neighbouring countries, Chad, Niger and Cameroon, people come from these countries, buy goods here and take them back, we have a lot of fish, onions, other things, they transport them from here to other parts of the country like the south" (Kanko, 2022)

<sup>69</sup> "The government should try and create a new environment where the private sector will come into play so that people will get jobs and be busy and have source of livelihood." (Kanko, 2022)

The solution to this problem proposed by the interviewees is to train young people in the Northeast in skills that can make them self-reliant. With the support of associations and start-up capital, a private sector could be created in the North that supports the area and offers more job opportunities. Whether it is capital investment in the agricultural sector, health, education, technology, or construction, it could help support graduates who are currently unable to find work. The only issue is where the financial fuel and capital for this can come from if the insurgents restrict foreign investors from being interested in investing in Nigeria. The capital evidently cannot come from the State either, as the only support they have given so far during the insurgency is security officers at the universities and schools in the cities. If the State is unable to provide more jobs and unwilling to provide the North with capital, then what is the solution? The solution could be to achieve further recognition of this situation in northeastern Nigeria from the outside, and from the inside with a better and more efficient government. It cannot be denied that during the presidency of Buhari, the insurgency did reduce in impact; however, it still severely affects communities that are being neglected. The interviewees and the literature outline the fact that the government under Goodluck was less effective in solving the insurgency than the Buhari government. However, after a severely long term of Buhari's presidency, the positives became less felt, perhaps over time Buhari gave up. Or, as exposed in the literature, perhaps because the group became less prevalent, he believed that it was possible to ignore them or claim that they are "technically defeated" (Buhari, 2016).

Furthermore, from this, it appears that the survival of Boko Haram, the continuation of their terrorising, and the impact they have on poverty and unemployment rates is rooted in the inefficiency of the government and the corruption which exists within the system. Kanko helped outline another point, the issues with networks, signals, and electricity<sup>70</sup>. Not only are the people in the villages left to struggle post-attacks because of their location and invisibility to the State; but they are also struggling to reach contact with anyone outside of the villages. The villages usually only have access to the radio. This could explain why Patience was in the bush for so long, for seven days after the attack,

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<sup>70</sup> "The primary means of communication here is the VHF radio because of times the government will shut down the normal GSM, so we have to resolve back to the use of radio." (Kanko, 2022)

no one came to help them<sup>71</sup>. This could be partly due to the Boko Haram groups occupying the village, but also partly due to the amount of time it took to reach support and for the State to react.

### ***Conclusion***

It appears that the root cause of Boko Haram begins with the history of Nigeria, the divides between the North and the South, and the tension created by British colonisation and their restructuring of the government system. This opinion is based on the knowledge shared by Kanko and many scholars, including Gwadabe et al. (2018) and Bertoni et al. (2019). The survival of Boko Haram, the continuation of their terrorising, and the impact they have on poverty and unemployment rates are rooted in the inefficiency of the government and the corruption that exists within the system. Although many of the interviewees praised the government for implementing security strategies, for example, having security forces around cities and schools, this remained the State's only visible attempt to help. The unemployment issues are very clearly contributed to by the lack of support by the government and their control over the job industry.

This research has outlined that the beginning of this radicalisation derived from divides and religious tensions in the country. Yusuf's attempt to anger parts of the population and fuel his ideologies also derived from the idea that Islam is neglected and disrespected. Muslims saw Western education as a way of saying that their education was not necessary or good enough. In fact, Western education does not aim to eliminate religious beliefs or studies; it simply aims to provide children with basic skills and knowledge that can give them jobs in the future. Although Boko Haram began many years after the colonisation of Nigeria, anger and feelings towards the power that the West had exerted on the country are some of the main reasons that motivated Yusuf to create Boko Haram.

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<sup>71</sup> “After the 7th day, there were some security guards sent to my village and they were able to take us back to our village and I met my family again.” (Patience, 2022)

## **4.2 Who are the main groups of youth affected by the Boko Haram insurgency in the BAY regions?**

### ***4.2.1 Almajiri Children***

Within the theoretical review, almajiri children were described as vulnerable to terrorist recruitment, in contrast, the interviewees spoke of the potential of these children if they were offered the correct opportunities. There are a high number of almajiri children who attend Islamic studies because their parents cannot afford to care for them. Therefore, their Islamic studies do not always mean that their parents would not like them to have a Western education if they could accommodate that. The interviewees expressed the fact that many of the almajiri children wish that they could go to Western schools; they observe others in their uniforms and look up to them as something they cannot financially afford. In the literature review, Hoechner (2018) claimed that many Muslim families in the North do not want their children to learn English, which some of the interviewees claimed was traditionally true. However, over time, another reason for not placing them in Western schools is the fear of insurgents and the cost of education. Many parents who traditionally wanted their children to go to the almajiri system, or Islamic education, are beginning to see that Western schools offer more opportunities and their child's education would be less limited. Some of the interviewees, on the other hand, said that many parents do not see the point in education at all<sup>72</sup>. Kanko had a neighbour whose children were not in school because they could not afford the uniform. Kanko bought his neighbour's child a uniform, but the child still did not go to school because his father did not see the point and did not push him to go.

This thesis has found an overlap between whether Muslim children want Western education, whether their parents see the advantages or not, and whether the family has the funds to allow their children to be in school. Hoechner (2018, p.69) speaks of almajiris believing that "secular schooling is the schooling of the rich". This is something that is agreed on by the interviewees who expressed that the almajiri children want the education but feel that they are financially restricted from it. Almajiri schools

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<sup>72</sup> "You know education here, somehow we are backwards, most of the children are growing up and the parents don't take education as a priority." (Nina, 2022)

remain free, but are also overloaded with too many children that they cannot provide for. Many people living in metropolitan areas do not understand why children are sent to almajiri schools because they see them suffering on the streets, begging and hawking. However, as mentioned, many parents in the villages sent their children away to the city because they could no longer care for them themselves.

#### ***4.2.2 Psychologically Impacted Children***

The psychologically impacted children are those who have witnessed trauma by insurgents or because of insurgents. Many children have been kidnapped and sexually assaulted during attacks, others have witnessed attacks around them, and others have been displaced, left homeless, lost their families, and lost their livelihoods, resulting in different levels of post-traumatic stress. The theoretical review noted that Boko Haram-induced trauma has significantly reduced school attendance and Ogechi (2018) claimed that the youth are taunted. Each child has been impacted differently by the insurgency, and each child in northeastern Nigeria has had their childhood affected. They have been required to deal with the trauma that no child should have to deal with, and various interviewees discussed the fact that there is a lack of access to counselling and therapy for these children.

Patience described how her experience with the insurgents did not prevent her from wanting to go to school. She explained that although it was traumatic, she was lucky and needed to continue to live, study, and fight against the insurgents' efforts. She intends to prove that the insurgents will not make her back down<sup>73</sup>. Consistent with this, Abubakar who escaped an attempted kidnapping on public transportation in Yobe state claimed that this ambush fuelled him to continue in his fight against Boko Haram. It made him want to work harder to help the people in the northeast of Nigeria<sup>74</sup>. In some cases, as adults, the interviewees can see why their education is crucial; they can see that the children need to persist and pursue their schooling to be the future of Nigeria and change the current dynamics.

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<sup>73</sup> “There was some fear but I wasn't really traumatised or something, I still went to school confidently” (Patience, 2022)

<sup>74</sup> “So, if Boko Haram attacking me once made me fear those communities, who else is going to help them. It motivated me and energised me to do more.” (Abubakar, 2022)

### **4.2.3 IDP Children**

The theoretical framework discussed the psychological impact of being displaced and the effect that it can have on a child's education (Ogechi, 2018). However, it was not until the discussions with the interviewees that the conditions in which children are living in the IDP camps were exposed<sup>75</sup>. Most of them do not go to school unless provided by NGOs with some classes. They are usually playing and messing around. Some of the families in IDP camps have been there for a long time, they arrived following an attack on their village, and have not had the means to leave since. The government has attempted to close some of the camps and told people that it was safe to return to their villages<sup>76</sup>. The interviewees claimed that many were reluctant to believe that they could return home. They were afraid of another attack, seeing the aftermath of the previous attack, and having to rebuild their livelihoods that they abandoned so quickly. The review only investigated the psychological impact felt by displaced children, whereas the empirical research and data demonstrated the number of these children, their locations in the outskirts of major cities in the North, and the lack of them in schools. IDP children are told to attend public schools but most often cannot afford to buy their uniforms or resources. At times, they are somewhat supported by organisations and provided food, but not enough to sustain the number of people in the camps. Most of all, they are not provided with enough support to leave the camps and they are unsure of where they can find safety and protection.

### **4.2.4 Unaccompanied Children**

'Unaccompanied children' includes many of the almajiri children or IDP children because they represent those who have lost their caregivers or parents during the insurgency, or the challenges faced in the Northeast. Unaccompaniedness is something that significantly impacts a child's life prospects. As seen in the theoretical framework, Last (2020) highlighted that a child does not only learn from their education at school, but they also learn from being educated at home. This includes learning family values,

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<sup>75</sup> "The IDP camps are deprived, isolated, they don't enjoy some of their basic rights" (Mustapha, 2022)

<sup>76</sup> "I think last year around 2021 they made the IDPs return to their local government and communities I think but there are still some that refuse to go back." (Ishaya, 2022)



morals, manners, etc. If a child raises themselves, they may become angry towards those that have been raised in loving family environments. It is the same for children who live in poverty and are sent away by their parents because they cannot afford to care for them. These children may suffer psychologically because of this and feel neglected, not necessarily by their families, but by the State and the situation for not letting them have what others seem to have so easily. The interviewees spoke of the age of many children on the streets, some as young as four or five years old<sup>77</sup>. At such a young age, if they are not supported by the State or put into education, they are going to continue to face struggles. As they grow up facing more challenges than others, their feelings of anger and neglect may also stretch. These children who are unaccompanied need to be detected, recognised, supported, and offered opportunities.

#### ***4.2.5 The Unemployed Youth***

During the theoretical framework, Onuoha (2011) claimed that some of the Boko Haram members were unemployed graduates. Although it is important to note the neglect felt by the unemployed youth in the Northeast, it is also crucial that they do not become perceived as vulnerable to extremist recruitment. As seen within the almajiri section, this thesis has also outlined the fact that often those who are struggling and feeling forgotten by the State are associated with the extremists and their recruitment strategies. However, it also aims to outline the fact that these associations are extremely problematic and demotivating to those subjected to them. For the unemployed youth, life is already a struggle after university, and finding a job can be extremely difficult and distressing. If they feel like people on the outside are worrying that these feelings of abandonment by the State are leaving them likely to result in extremism, then they will feel considerably more misunderstood.

When speaking to the interviewees, some of whom are currently in university and others who have graduated and are currently unemployed, a strong desire to make a

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<sup>77</sup> *“Most of them they just believe in any help because they have nothing to do, no food to eat, no better place to sleep so this kind of children they lack this place, so for that reason they will be engaged, most of them you just see them sleeping outside, doing nothing and for that reason that will give an avenue for people to push them towards changing their mindset because most of the almajiris if you see them, they are very young, some of them just five years.”* (Adeolu, 2022)

change and help future generations of Nigeria could be felt. Although they themselves were concerned about unemployment or their situation after graduation, they noticed the importance of education and the need for greater self-reliance. They agreed that if they could not rely on the protection of the State, they needed to rely on themselves and the support of a community<sup>78</sup>. Communities themselves can develop and thrive with the combination of skills within them. If those who have graduated are able to teach the younger children the values of going to school and the value of believing in themselves, then the future of Nigeria will improve. Hope within a community is essential and will allow it to thrive when they achieve some support and recognition from external actors or the State.

### ***Conclusion***

This comparative analysis outlined the gaps and overlaps that are found during this research. Firstly, there is a clash between promoting education and increasing attendance in schools whilst also protecting the schools from insurgency threats and the danger in which they are forced to function. The research developed on the idea that while finding ways to make the State react and help out-of-school children, they need to create strategies to conquer Boko Haram and make sure that the schools are safe. It allowed for the questioning of whether the State is on the side of the people; on one hand, they have implemented security measures, and the cities feel safer. However, on the other hand, rural areas remain unsafe and Nigerians trying to make a change feel unsupported. If the State was on the side of the people and was unsure of how to help eliminate the extremists or reduce the poverty and unemployment rates, this thesis suggests that they should take inspiration from those creating associations, strategies, and initiating dialogue. The State could use the human resources that they already have and help fund the associations that fight and work towards helping the northeast of Nigeria. This would include listening to people like the interviewees involved in this research. For example, Abubakar's association and Mustapha's well-thought-out strategies, recognising the work being done by people like Kanko with the World Food

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<sup>78</sup> *“I decided it would be good for me to study engineering because it’s more about youth empowerment skills and I can be able to have my hand business and handwork without having to depend on the government.”* (Yakin, 2022)

Programme, Obi with the UN, and again also Mustapha with the UN. Each of the interviewees involved in this research has solutions and ideas for the future of the country; they need to be listened to. Another catch outlined in this analysis is whether poverty and unemployment rates helped fuel the creation of Boko Haram or whether they have increased due to the existence of the group. The answer is both. Poverty, unemployment, the neglect of the North and colonisation charged the creation of Boko Haram. Boko Haram has also incredibly worsened the situation; its actions have fuelled fear, insecurity, poverty, struggles, unemployment, and the loss of livelihoods. The problems in northeastern Nigeria can all be related to insecurity and many of them can also be related to the State.

### **LINKING TO THE CURRENT POLITICAL SPHERE**

Since the interviews were conducted in November and December 2022, other prominent issues continue to fuel poverty and unemployment in Nigeria as of early 2023. In January and February 2023, in the lead-up to the national elections, affecting the people and the youth was the lack of access to cash due to a decision made by the central bank to renew the cash notes (africanews, 2023). Obi described that this decision led to dire consequences; the number of notes printed was not sufficient to allow everyone to access their funds. The changeover also happened with a severe lack of notice and left many with invalid notes and unable to change them due to the extremely long queues outside the banks. Many people and families have been left without access to cash and therefore unable to provide for their families or to get on public transport to go to work (Jolaoso, 2023).

Furthermore, with the aim of improving unemployment rates, Obi claimed that many of the Youth in Nigeria had hoped that during the February 2023 presidential elections, the Labour Party presidential candidate Peter Obi would win. The quantity of support he achieved shocked the two-party system and introduced a third party into the race. Peter Obi claimed that one of his primary objectives was to reduce youth unemployment, use resources in the North more effectively, and make Nigeria thrive again (Africanews, 2023). To the disappointment of the youth, Peter Obi was unsuccessful in the elections,

and the presidential position was awarded to Bola Tinubu from the All-Progressives Congress (APC) (Orjinmo, 2023). Orjinmo (2023) outlined the fact that the voter outcome was low due to cash and fuel shortages, delays in the opening of polling stations, violence, and voter intimidation. Tinubu's victory has been challenged, with opponents claiming the results were rigged and that INEC (the electronic voting process) was corrupt (Orjinmo, 2023). Tinibu is from the same political party as his predecessor Muhammadu Buhari. Buhari's term is often characterised by the existence of "economic hardship, widespread insecurity, and record high inflation" (Orjinmo, 2023). Many fear that the new president, with his similarities to Buhari, will fail to solve and conquer these issues. As touched on in this paper, Buhari is known to have reduced some of the Boko Haram threats from cities and the South (Higazi, 2016); however, its continued existence and attacks in the North prove that they remain a problem. This article has highlighted that the youth are some of the most affected by insecurity, poverty, and unemployment. The current and newly elected president has a duty to confront the issues at hand and to support the youth as the future of the nation. The severity of the situation in which the groups highlighted in this research project live is high. The hope of the youth, and of those who were not able to vote or who lost the vote, is low.

## MAIN CONCLUSION

This study combined the concepts of youth development, tackling religious violence, living through terrorism, and the importance of education. It highlighted the obstacles to change, including the State's inefficiency, the effects of colonisation, the power dynamics, inequalities, and the need for international support. By analysing the different impacts on education and the various costs that play into attending school, this research examined the connection between the insurgency and the number of children in compulsory education. Although the theoretical framework established that attending school is a risk for the children in Nigeria, the comparative analysis outlined that education is a tool for the future of these children and the development of the country. Education is not only crucial for skill development and employment prospects, but it also keeps children off the streets, away from doing nothing and becoming more prone to negative behaviours. The interviewees of this study helped to highlight the fact that although much of the literature places out-of-school children in a negative light, as those vulnerable to extremist recruitment, the youth have been the key to many positive advances and changes within Nigeria. Obi, in particular, perceives youth as able to settle conflict and tensions on a small scale, leading to less tension within regions later. He believes that if youth can teach each other to be more respectful of one another, interculturally aware, and anti-violence, that they can build communities that cooperate rather than divide. While this study highlighted the most impacted groups of youth, it is hoped that their potential was also exposed. If these groups were offered equal opportunities and provided more safety by the State from the insurgents, then they could become entrepreneurs and self-reliant, which many of the interviewees claim is the key to development.

In analysing the insurgents, their actions, their targets, and their anger, this study was able to pinpoint various foundational complexities and areas of conflict that fuelled who the terrorist group are. The theoretical framework assessed the confusion about whether the group aims to attack the State or Western education. The literature outlined that the answer is both. They have aimed to attack the State increasingly since the murder of Mohammed Yusuf in 2009. However, they are also partly targetting the State when they

attack schools. This is because their attacks are against State institutions, the acceptance of the West by the State, and the State's allowance for children to be taught to be 'infidels'. Other literature exposed the idea that Boko Haram do not have a target or an aim, that although they claim to want to 'Islamise' the State, their attacks in fact lack organisation, structure, and sense. The interviewees expressed that the insurgents perceive everyone as a target, regardless of religion, age, or gender. There are of course different factors that trigger the group more, like girls in schools, or a direct despise towards Christianity. However, so long as people disagree with Boko Haram, they are infidels.

*What are the root causes of Boko Haram and what fuels its existence?*

The root causes and the fuel that keeps Boko Haram alive have been foregrounded within this study. It has been found that from its foundation in 2002, Boko Haram has been motivated by hatred towards the West and anger towards the colonisers and the impact that they have had on modern-day Nigerian society. Looking at colonisation and the arrival of the British via the West Coast of Nigeria, their manipulation via indirect rule, and their influence on the institutional structure, many felt forgotten and segregated in the process. Boko Haram's original recruits derived from the almajiri school system, mainly due to Mohammed Yusuf's connections within this system, but also to do with the attempted dismantling of this system by the British. Today the dynamics have changed and although the almajiri system still exists, the interviewees expressed that many of these children would like Western education too. Most of the almajiri children are sent away by their families who would like them to obtain Islamic knowledge, and also many are sent away because their families cannot afford to provide for them themselves. In recent years, the Nigerian government has tried to ban the almajiri system due to children being perceived as problematic and living unhygienically on the streets. The quantity of almajiri children on the streets was highlighted by the interviewees who claimed that the situation is dire.

Another root cause and fuel of Boko Haram is poverty and unemployment. The poverty struggles within the BAY regions have only become increasingly worse, and more

families have been obliged to send their children to tsangayas. Millions of people have been displaced from their homes, have had their livelihoods destroyed during attacks, and live in fear. Poverty has aggravated the situation and is a factor that Boko Haram continues to fuel. The reason why poverty was outlined as a root cause is due to the inequalities it causes that made many of the insurgents more vulnerable to recruitment. Unemployment has also contributed to this marginalisation and increased poverty. The State has failed to help the unemployed or increase the number of job opportunities in the country as a whole. Therefore, the root causes and fuel of Boko Haram have been highlighted as the impact of colonialism and the arrival of Western education, the continuing rise in poverty and unemployment, and the failures of the State.

*Who are the main groups of youth affected by the Boko Haram insurgency in the BAY regions?*

As mentioned above, one of the largest groups affected by Boko Haram is the almajiri children. However, other groups significantly impacted are those who have been forced to move, leave everything, have their education interrupted, and see things they should never have had to have seen. This includes internally displaced children, psychologically impacted children and unaccompanied children. These three groups of children include those who have lost their parents or family members during attacks or displacement. Patience is one of the interviewees who temporarily lost her family during an attack and spent seven days hiding from the insurgents in the bush. Her story is touching and highlights one of the many traumatising situations children face in the BAY regions; therefore, her interview transcript has been added to Appendix (2) of this research.

The psychologically impacted children include those who are suffering from post-trauma due to attacks, being kidnapped, being sexually assaulted, and being used by insurgents. Although gender-based violence was not adequately focused on during this study, it is a contributing factor in the psychological consequences of the insurgency. Future research should focus on these children who have been victims of sexual assault and trauma. Mustapha highlighted the issue that not enough cases are

reported and that the number of those affected by sexual violence is extremely high. He foregrounded within this discussion the number of girls with unwanted pregnancies and no idea where the ‘father’ is. Mustapha’s interview transcript has also been included in Appendix (1) of this document, as it contains a unique opportunity to learn about the situation and horrors that many are facing due to insurgents. Furthermore, the final group of youth touched on is the unemployed youth. Mentioning this group enabled a comparative analysis between the struggles of going to school and the struggles of having been able to have an education but graduating without job opportunities. Yakin is one of the interviewees who is currently struggling to find work. He is passionate about the youth and their potential, however, is facing the impact of State failure himself. Although qualified, there are no jobs available for him; this is something that thousands are facing in the BAY regions. Graduating and not being able to obtain a job is demoralising and can demotivate younger children from going to school or seeing the advantage of education.

Overall, with the help of the interviewees, their stories and insight into the reality on the ground in the BAY regions, this study has described the situation for the youth in Nigeria today. It has taught the idea that education is vital and a tool for the development of Nigeria. However, it has also revealed the truth of Obi’s claim that “the youth are the tool for the future”. If Nigeria can create a skilled youth, it can build its economy, its potential, and the quality of life it offers.



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## APPENDICES

### **Appendix 1 - *Transcript - Interview with Mustapha - 01.12.22***

(following network issues)

Lois - "Sorry about that Mustapha, do you mind starting again?"

Mustapha - "I also have to apologise for making you people change decision, thank you for your tolerance, thank you for your understanding..."

First and foremost, I am Mustapha Tukum, I reside in Adamawa state, I am a protection advocate, that is I work in the sub-sector of child protection, gender-based violence, I also participate in meeting of mine and action, housing, land and properties. I was in this field of protection since 2016. I work in the context of a humanitarian setting, precisely in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria where we experience insurgency and sometimes some sort of complex conflict here in the North-East. So this is just a little bit about me."

Lois - "Can you tell me a little bit about your education background?"

Mustapha - "I attended my Bsc at the University of Maiduguri, graduated two years ago. My field of study was health and education. I have NCE (national certificate in education) from federal college of education here in Yola, that's for secondary school education, and I attended my secondary school in the federal college of Nigeria, push back in 2003 I graduated.

I just wanted to add, I was in humanitarian working even before I graduated from university, so due to the humanitarian-setting is challenging, I had to engage myself in lambing. Seriously so that I was able to have a diploma with the ITCILO (international training centre for international labour organisation), then the Institute of Peace where I have a certificate in analysis, youth building, I have a lot, I have been given seven certificates with the United States Institute of Peace and from the United Nations e-campus. I am happy, I am proud to inform you that I have two buddies with the United Nations."

Lois - "That is really interesting, so your job right now in child protection, is that your current job?"

Mustapha - "Yes, not precisely, it is general protection concern with GBV matters and also children protection. We have officers that are under me, like the persons working in the subsector of child protection who report directly to me, while the persons working in the GBV sector they also report back to me. So that's just the kind of double direction I have."

Lois - "What is the name of your association?"

Mustapha - "The journey started from community-based organisation but so far I am engaged with an international organisation, international human rights commission."

Lois - "So is this a UN organisation?"

Mustapha - "No, this one is not a UN organisation, but back then I worked with the UN. The international human rights commission is not a UN organisation but they work together hand in hand."

Lois - "This organisation is based in Nigeria?"

Mustapha - "Yep"

Lois - "Did you grow up in Adamawa?"

Mustapha - "Yes of course, I was born in Adamawa state and I grew up in Adamawa state."

Lois - "What kind of jobs did your parents do?"

Mustapha - "My father is a businessman, while my mum is a housewife. You know the context under which we are raised here, is that normally if a lady is married she is expected to stay as a housewife, she is not expected to engage in business. Until now with the system of advocacy, we are trying to change that narrative of financial dependence to ensure that women do have some financial independence for them to be having some cash."

Lois - "On a daily basis, what tasks do you have to perform for your job?"

Mustapha - "Number 1, my priority is to identify cases of GBV or child protection concern. After identifying, we have field workers, we call them case workers, it is their duty to identify cases. When they identify cases, they have their supervisor that is dealing with the nature of the case they identify. If it is child concern they deal with the child protection officer we have, and if it is GBV related we have a GBV-related person, that they the case within. It is from there that the GBV or child protection officer will bring the case to me and it is my duty to decide on if the case is going to the police or if the case should be going to the medical centre or the case is to be taken to a mental health or social health centres. It is my duty to identify and to communicate with those agencies concerned. But, I also have a priority here, where I do not just decide for our survivors, but we what we do is work with them to identify their needs, conduct certain risk and needs assessments to identify their basic needs, So with the information I have, I will then decide that this is the best thing to do. And before even deciding, I have to inform the survivor that we think that this is one of the best things for you, this is providing, it will help you. It is now left for the survivor to say whether or not we continue with the decision we have. So this is just in brief."

Lois - "So these survivors, are they still children?"

Mustapha - "Yes of course, I can tell you that earlier this month, I identified a case of sexual assault perpetrated against a four-days-old baby. One of the most pressing issues I so far have on ground, so we have much cases here of child protection concern or child abuses here serious."

Lois - "In that situation, who decides what happens, when they can't make the decision themselves?"

Mustapha - "It is not my duty by the provisions of the law to make decisions on behalf of the child. They have their guardians or their parents, once the case is identified, what we do is to try to communicate with their parents or their guardians. It is the duty of their guardians to number 1 sign a consent form for release of information or a referral later. It is their duty. But, once we have a case of a child above 18 years of age, that person can then make the decision because they are above the age of legal responsibility."

Lois - "So do you work with children from birth to 18, is that your age range?"

Mustapha - "Yea, I work with the children and also the adults."

Lois - "Who do you think are the main perpetrators of these problems, what is the reason for the number of children that need your help and need this protection?"

Mustapha - "Okay according to the recent assessment conducted earlier this year by UNICEF. It has proved that there are over 2 million cases that are under-reported here in Adamawa state. 2 million cases that are under-reported. So the motivating factor behind people perpetrating acts of child abuses is related sometimes with power dynamic, inequality, gender inequality, and disrespect for human rights. These are the three basics that are making these people to perpetrate acts of discrimination or abuses."

Lois - "Okay so generally, who are the people committing the crimes, mostly men?"

Mustapha - "Of course yes, men are always people committing or perpetrating certain acts. Especially when we talk about the cases of gender-based violences, these are sexual assault or something sexual in nature, that be sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and abuses, these are mostly committed by the male gender."

Lois - "And have you worked on any sexual-based violence cases that were committed by members of Boko Haram?"

Mustapha - "Yes recently, last week I had an interview with a reporter from DW about cases of women who experienced... there is a name for the disease..., it's not connected with STI or STD, erm..."

Obi - “We can come back to that later”

Mustapha - “Okay thank you, so there are women, or a category of this group of people were affected with the disease as a result of serious raping, continual and violent acts of Boko Haram. So they contacted them and they came back to me to ask whether we know about the situation and what we are doing, whether we are providing certain services to those survivors. I informed them that we do the best we can, by we work to what those people identified, sometimes you talk to them because they come from different contexts. From where I am operating here in Yola, sometimes as a result of stigma, ‘shyness’, they don’t want to open up, to cases especially dealing with a sexual aspect. What they do is that they will tell you that they just need medication. We don’t give medication but we know organisations on the ground that are providing such things so we make referrals with their consent.”

Lois - “These women that you’re talking about, how old are they?”

Mustapha - “They are elderly, basically I don’t know how DW get to make the identification, but the people I worked with prior to DW contacting me, I identified a group of 20 and above mostly.”

Lois - “They are now 20 and above, but when they were actually victims of sexual assault, was that in their younger years? Or was that recently?”

Mustapha - “The cases of victimisation among people, from the aspect of Boko Haram is seriously declining, yes of course, because not as before, this time I can say that the State and government are trying to make aware at the level of transmission from humanitarian to developmental, due to serious reduction in cases of GBV and child abuse.”

Lois - “Do you think that many children’s education has been impacted by these situations of sexual assault and the interruption that it has caused to their studies?”

Mustapha - “Of course yes, as a result of emotional distress, trauma, which is very important, trauma, like we interact with children back then in 2018 when they’re in a class and they maybe heard any sound, they would begin to be crying, to be shouting, that they want to go, they need at least therapy because as a result of trauma they are having, we interacted with, come on, come on, so that actually deprived them and impeded their level of performance in schools. Making them not friendly (happy) to learn, friendly to understand what is being taught in class.”

Lois – “Are there enough therapists or psychological institutions for the quantity of people that need them?”

Mustapha – “Seriously I can tell you that we have very limited organisations or institutions set aside by the government to help people with these problems. Because things dealing with psychological aspect need a specialist which we have very limited number of them here in

Nigeria, precisely operating in the northeastern part. Erm organisations like the ION and abode, these are the organisations that offering or providing services of mental health of psychological support. What we did now within this, the UN is able to come up with psychologist first aid, where somebody will be present and be able to give psychology first aid without the intervention of mental health and social workers or even before they are deployed down to communities, they will be given psychological first aid. That's the only thing we have on ground."

Lois – "That leads me to my next question, do think that the state does enough in this situation? Are you happy with the reaction of the state?"

Mustapha – "Please come again, it cracked."

Lois – "Are you happy with the reaction of the state or the Nigerian government in terms of the situation in Nigeria and these victims of assault? Do you think the state is doing enough or having to rely more on external associations and the UN because the state isn't doing enough?"

Mustapha – "Yeah of course, I am hopeless about government intervention, I am hopeless, I give more focus and I have more confidence when it comes to organisations put together themselves to face certain problems; I then have confidence that something good will be coming out of it. But when it is government, we lose hope together with communities with which we identify, for instance government or civil servants cannot decide or government will deploy some people or servants to go down to communities and conduct assessment, but people don't usually give them information because they don't have hope that something good will come out of the information they provided. So as for me, what I am confident in is when I see organisations immobilising or even conducting an assessment. Organisations do have an interactive sessions with affected persons more than the government. So organisations so far do have information at hand, more than the government at this stage or federal I can say. And I can tell you, it's organisations so far that is even sharing some relevant information with government authorities. Not that the government sharing information as it is expected to happen."

Lois – "Okay, so in general people do not feel protected by the government or trust the government to help them after these situations, and if you were someone in government, how would you go about this? What changes would you make?"

Mustapha – "Yes, number 1 we must be accountable to affected population, Nigeria is multi-humanitarian setting where every location, every state, do have their own unique problem. The problem we have here in Adamawa state is quite different from the problem that is there in Sokoto or some other part of the country. Here in Adamawa state, the government cannot just decide that this is right thing I should be doing, you should be accountable, or I will be accountable to those affected persons. I would meet them, identify their needs, identify their age, try not to build expectations, have the record and the information and inform them clearly where I can afford to provide their basic needs as

identified, then inform them categorically clear that this and that we can't afford to provide but we will form an alliance with this or that organisation or even some philanthropies in concern, we will make sure that we provide with you when we are partnered and there should be transparency. There should be equal distribution, non-discriminatory, everybody's word needs to be had, no matter how bitter or sour it is. Government must have to give listening ears to hear from all angles, either bitter words or sweet words.”

Lois – “I actually spoke to someone from your region the other day, and they mentioned how there are a lot of children, almajiri children on the streets in Adamawa, who are trying to get access to education at the moment. Have you ever worked with almajiri children?”

Mustapha – “Yes I worked with them, but there is quite a problem, I am assuming every organisation will have an intended project or programme to implement about almajiri. Government are at the end, extreme end (network issues) ....

....Can you hear me now? Officials do have a special agreement with teachers of those almajiris, they are using them to achieve some certain somethings religious, politicians used to engage them in prayers and tell them that they would give them money in return. And those almajiris are the same people that are used to pay street crime, to ensure that the needs of the particular politicians that identify with their teachers are made. So, the government or politicians always stand at the end, the extreme end, to stop progress of every intended programme that will start as an eliminating tool for almajiri programmes in Nigeria.”

Lois – “So the government are trying to stop the almajiri programmes?”

Mustapha – “Directly the government are showing the world that they are doing their best to eliminate almajiri programme, but down on ground we have seen them and we are seeing them even now. Government officials used to go to the teachers of almajiri to engage them. As I mentioned earlier we have seen them and we are seeing them. I am a local person, I am like something from local context, so I take myself out of communities or busy communities. Even now as I am speaking to you and am in one the communities that have almajiri school, I know where they are, I know who the teachers are, and the teachers even know me, well I know most of their teachers yes. So I know how things are running basically.”

Lois – “So do you think that there is a problem where those children are not getting the education they need to get? Or you are saying they are in the schools, and that the schools still exist, so are they getting an adequate education or not?”

Mustapha – “Yes education I'm talking about, we have Western education and Arabic education/Islamic education. The education I was talking about is these children are deprived from enjoying Western education. Well because of the understanding, the negative understanding their parents have that Western education are mainly for Christian believers. But with advocacy and making awareness we got to have acceptance of a teacher. I know one person that even builded a hostel, for his students, for these almajiris, he built himself with collaboration of the government. He told me, because I interviewed him, I know him in



person, I have been to the facility, I entered into the facility, I saw everything there. These were constructed, they have water supply, they have bed, they have toilet, unlike what we having in the community where I am so far residing. They don't have hostel, they slept on street, they don't have toilet, they disturb the community with open defecation, leaving behind or causing serious cholera outbreak. I can tell you some months ago, the whole state of Adamawa suffered from cholera outbreak. And I am certain, I raised this concern during a protection meeting, that cholera outbreak was first found in the community I am talking about due to open defecation, they don't have toilets, they are not controlled."

Lois – "So actually you think that the government is focussing more on almajiri children than other children that are victims of the cholera outbreak, sexual assault?"

Mustapha – "One thing, the context here is very difficult to understand, media do have, the government have media stations. The government is responsible for piloting media stations. Whatever news you carry, you must meet government officials for censorship. They want to say this is right it can be published, whilst this and that should not be published. So because of that, anything in the interest or the conflicted interest of the government, the government is not liking it. But the issue of members of communities, I can tell you, public schools are not functioning like private institutions. I know teachers from public schools that usually or that dream to start their children in private schools due to low-quality types of education. I know them. I know them in person. But for the issue of almajiri, almajiri normally are children transported from different states. Yes, so the government doesn't give too much concern about them, whether or not they are going to school, the government has no idea about this. But, what the government is interested in is, when it comes to the political era, like now when the government is, or the government or Nigeria as a whole is facing an election. So this is the high time that a politicians engage with teachers of those almajiris and prayers, and by giving them money ensure that they get the votes of the mosques."

Lois – "Thank you, so in your opinion, who are the children that are the most affected by interruptions to education, lack of support by the state, sleeping on the streets, who are the children that are the most impacted by the situation in Nigeria right now?"

Mustapha – "Well, Nigeria is a very complex context."

Lois – "Let's focus on the Northeastern regions, your region."

Mustapha – "Here is Adamawa state, also is a complex context. We have unaccompanied children, unaccompanied. These children I am talking about, they live, they are not living with their parents, they are roaming about, they are unaccompanied, they are under no control of anybody. We have them, we have almajiris, we have orphans."

Lois – "Okay, and why are there so many orphans?"

Mustapha – "As a result of insurgency experienced recently."

Lois – "So these children that are roaming the streets, they are not going to school either?"

Mustapha – “They don’t used to, erm some months ago we contributed money to enrol 57 students, among them are orphans, almajiris, and unaccompanied children. The problem we had was a space to shelter these unaccompanied children to be able to be monitoring and to be sure that they attend school. The problem is very broad, very broad.”

Lois – “So these unaccompanied children are they part of the IDPs?”

Mustapha – “Yes what happened normally, we have IDPs and we have host communities. So normally those internally displaced persons, they are called internally displaced when they are identified by organisations conducting CCM (camp management outcome and coordination management). So, when they are identified, their needs are identified and this is where they will be categorised as IDPs. But when they are within host communities, back then there was no special programmes that is meant for those people at the host communities, and moreover and people at the host community, don’t have themselves interested to go to the IDP camps because they are seeing that people in the IDP camps are deprived, isolated, they don’t enjoy some of their basic rights. So this is one of the reasons why those people within the host community don’t have the intention to go to the IDP camps.”

Lois – “So actually what you’re saying is that, you’ve got people labelled IDPs, you’ve got the almajiri children, but then you also have this whole group of unaccompanied children that aren’t identified by the State and that need support from external associations.”

Mustapha – “Of course yes.”

Lois – “And they’re not going to school either?”

Mustapha – “Yes of course.”

Lois – “So the direction of my research is about youth development. Is there anything that you feel is important to be mentioned in particular in a project like that, when trying to describe to other people who are not in Nigeria what is happening?”

Mustapha – “Yep, seriously the issue of unwanted pregnancy. Yes, let me bring this forward. Unwanted pregnancy among teenage girls. Let’s make it in a more undignified way, unintended pregnancy among teenage girls, is absolutely raising because within last month we are able to identify three children, 3, age ranged from 13-15 years with unintended pregnancy. The other lady I was talking about, the case was brought to me by a police officer, a gender officer, she brought the matter to my table. I interviewed the lady and asked her what made her do this is. It was as a result of the fact that both of her parents were killed, she’s also unaccompanied. This is what I am telling you, she is unaccompanied, she stayed here with the metropolis, not knowing anybody, finding it difficult to eat, shelter, and this is where somebody made use of the opportunity, to corner her attention, to ask her to come to his room, to stay with him, he will give her shelter, and provide her with food, and he took the advantage to impregnate her. After impregnating her, he left to no one knows the location of the man, we tried our best to trace the man, she don’t even have his phone number. The number he was using before is no longer going, we tried to make use of the number to give it

to the police, that the police should try their ways to trace the location of the man. They said they couldn't do that because they only trace numbers when it's active. So that's how we left the matter. So the best service we did, we give to the lady the needs we identified, she needs shelter to cover for her needs and also the baby in her womb. We took her to one-stop centre, a facility here, supported by UNFPA, so we took her to the facility, she stayed there for some days, before they fought among them because she wasn't the only person in the facility here, so they fought as a result of misunderstanding and they made so much disruption that we cannot account for. So from there, I called a woman police, the police tried her base, to take her to another location. So I can tell you now the lady is no longer with us. But because maybe you want further information about the matter I can share with you the number of the police or I can call the police to know more about the case and more about the lady and then I brief you."

Lois – "Okay, thank you so much for sharing that story with us. I think definitely you have introduced a whole other category of children that are not spoken about or heard about from here in Europe, and that is really important for this project, because I want to make sure that I incorporate each different kind of child that is being affected by this and although it may be impossible to include everybody, I am really grateful for the fact that you have shown me another group of children impacted. I think that I have asked all of my questions, and thank you again Mustapha because this has really been eye-opening for me and I honestly have few words.. Is there anything else you would like to add?"

Mustapha – "Yea of course, seriously anybody working within the humanitarian context must have to believe that the situation here in Nigeria when we talk about, when we take ourselves away from the protection that is GBV or child protection. Let's take ourselves to this building aspect, we have the issue of complex conflict that is so far hitting the western/eastern parts of the country; families flee, parents die, or parents killed by unknown gunmen, sometimes they are labelled as kidnappers, bandits. Security operatives are aware of their doings, and nobody is ever intervening, people are dying, people are being killed, children are homeless, parents flee, they leave behind their families, babies don't have where to sleep, no medication, quality of life is no longer assured, there are treated, they are forced. I attended one programme that we interacted with some of the people, one of our colleagues who was working in those areas, the story that man was giving we all cried for what we had, he has touching, its disturbing, the bandits will ask you to gather money, bandits, whilst security operatives and the government's responsibility is to protect you and your property have failed to the level that bandits kidnap us, are informing people publicly to gather an amount of money, 20 million naira, 30 million, and even above and that if they fail to gather the money, they will come kill them in number. This is one of the hard pressing matters, seriously when we come to this aspect, we have a lot to discuss, it's heart-touching, very heart-touching. I don't know whether you will make provision in your proposal or to make it flexible so that it accommodates all issues in the northwestern part too as they are facing serious concern."

Lois – “Okay, so can I just ask, this bandit and these criminals, where do they come from, what does their anger come from? Are they related to Boko Haram or are they just other people that are angry towards, like who are these criminals?”

Mustapha – “They are aggrieved members of the same communities, the same states. They belong in the same states, they are aggrieved members that feel that the government is no longer active, that the government can no longer provide, or government can no longer protect them. They are jobless people, illiterate I can see, they decide to work on themselves and that’s the reason why sometimes if they try to theft they don’t have the opportunity so they begin to have weapons and to act on people by killing, or abducting persons and call on the family of that person to bring a certain amount of money as ransom before they get the man free.”

Lois – “So that is similar to things that Boko Haram have done with their abductions as well so are they sort of fuelled by the same anger and the same neglect of the state?”

Mustapha – “Of course yes”

Lois – “So these people are acting individually and as they get angrier, they’re acting collectively with people that feel their anger too.”

Mustapha – “There you say it all.”

Lois – “Okay thank you so much Mustapha, I’ll leave it there because I could speak to you for hours, I want to know everything, but for the purpose of this interview and transcribing it and incorporating what you have said into my research, I want to make sure that I use the most important things that you have said.”

Mustapha – “Yes I am grateful, I am grateful.”

Lois – “No I’m grateful to you.”

Obi – “Thank you Mustapha, you really went deep and spoke with your heart. I just wanted to ask you, is any of your relatives or relations, family, been affected by the insurgency?”

Mustapha – “No not at all.”

Obi – “Okay, you really spoke with your heart and thank you for the facts you shared and perhaps I will or she will follow up with you in case there are more clarifications we need. Thank you, I really appreciate it, you stuck to the facts and the information.”

**Appendix 2 - Transcript - Interview with Patience - 27.12.22**

Patience - "My name is Patience, I am a student of mass communication at the University of Maiduguri. I am 22 years old. I live in Maiduguri, Borno state."

Lois - "When do you plan to graduate?"

Patience - "God-given, I will be graduating next year, September."

Lois - "When did you start studying in Maiduguri?"

Patience - "2018."

Lois - "During that time have your studies been interrupted by anything going on in Nigeria around you?"

Patience - "Yes though it was strike and corona."

Lois - "What sort of strikes took place?"

Patience - "During my part one we went on a three-month strike, it was ASU (university union that hosts the teachers and students together, association of staff university)."

Lois - "Did you grow up in Borno state?"

Patience - "Not really, I grew up in Adamawa state, I came to Borno in 2016."

Lois - "So did you go to primary and secondary school in Adamawa state?"

Patience - "Yes ma'am."

Lois - "Was your primary or your secondary schooling ever affected or interrupted?"

Patience - "Yes a lot of times, that time it was Boko Haram stuff, once there was an attack around outside, we go home from school and we wait till things are better and then we go back."

Lois - "So my project that I am writing about is about how Boko Haram and terrorism have affected child development and children's education. So would you say that these events made you scared to go to school?"

Patience - "Not myself no, not really, because when I was much younger, when the attacks happened at my site we just left and went to Kaduna and I continued with my studies so I didn't have the fear. And when I came to Maiduguri the Boko Haram attacks were less though

there are days we don't go to school because we hear sounds of bombs and shootings or whatever. Yes, there was some fear but I wasn't really traumatised or something, I still went to school confidently.”

Lois - “Okay and do you think that your friends felt the same as you?”

Patience - “No there are people that are really scared to continue their studies.”

Lois - “So were you always warned before they came, so that you didn't go to school? Or was there ever a time when you were at school and Boko Haram came?”

Patience - “Sometimes we heard shootings before, maybe in the night so we don't go in the morning or sometimes it happened while we were in school like during my secondary school days sometimes from school we run into the bush and our parents will be worried of where we are because we didn't come back home and there was an attack in the town.”

Lois - “Do you think that being a girl made you more vulnerable to this group?”

Patience - “In my site, if you happen to come across the insurgents, if you are a girl, they usually just carry them and go with them and for the guys they most of the time kill them.”

Lois - “So do your family still live in Adamawa or do they live in Maiduguri?”

Patience - “We relocated from Adamawa to Maiduguri because in 2014 the insurgency in my site was much so we packed and left the place but we visited in 2018.”

Lois - “Okay so you moved because of the insurgency?”

Patience - “Yes ma'am”

Lois - “Now in Maiduguri do you feel safe?”

Patience - “Not completely safe but it's better than my site.”

Lois - “At the university have you got a lot of security forces there?”

Patience - “Yes there are securities, not a lot but yes some at the gates, they check before you can enter, so you are somehow safe.”

Lois - “Okay so in your primary and secondary school, there was no security?”

Patience - “Yes there are schools that have no securities.”

Lois - "Okay so do you think that living in a city is a little bit safer than living within the villages and the communities?"

Patience - "Yes ma'am."

Lois - "So during this time has the government done anything to help you or the people that this has affected?"

Patience - "Yes they, here in Maiduguri, yes but on my site no, it's like the government have not, their hands have not reached our village. Those that are displaced from their places, they live in IDP camps, they made a camp for IDPs."

Lois - "That is outside the city of Maiduguri or it's in Adamawa state?"

Patience - "No it's in Maiduguri, Borno state."

Lois - "The children in these camps do they have access to education?"

Patience - "No ma, there are the public primary schools but there's no education. Actually, they just go to play if they want to, they don't study."

Lois - "Okay so do you see a lot of children in your everyday life that do not go to school?"

Patience - "Yes ma'am a lot of them that are not going to school, aside almajiris they are IDP those are those that are moved from their towns because of the insurgents."

Lois - "And are they on their own?"

Patience - "Some of them are in the streets and some of them are in the IDP camps."

Lois - "Are the almajiri children living in the streets?"

Patience - "I am not sure, they say they have teachers but I am not sure because even now if you go out at night you still see them outside."

Lois - "And none of these children are going to school?"

Patience - "No."

Lois - "But if they wanted to, could they go to a public government school?"

Patience - "Even the government school, those that are living on their own cannot afford even those in the IDP camps, they are struggling to get food they cannot afford. It is not just free

the way it sounds, like government school, you have to still pay something to enter the school.”

Lois - “What do they usually do during the day if they cannot go to school?”

Patience - “They beg, go around begging.”

Lois - “How old are most of these children?”

Patience - “4, 5, 6, small small children and a few older children.”

Lois - “What do you think needs to be done to get these children into school?”

Patience - “If the government could be able to provide feeding to them, because the reason why they are on the street is because they need food to eat. If the government would be able to provide food for them and then school they shouldn’t need to pay anything, even their uniforms should be provided, their books, they would go to school if they could eat.”

Lois - “Where are these children's parents?”

Patience - “Some of the children will tell you that their parents were killed during the insurgency but some of them their parents purposely sent them on this trip because they can’t pay/ care for them.”

Lois - “Is that because of poverty that they cannot pay for them?”

Patience - “Yes.”

Lois - “And so for the children who go to school and university like you, do you think that then there is a problem after university? Is it hard to get a job?”

Patience - “Yes it is actually hard to get a job.”

Lois - “What do you think the government could do to make sure that more people get jobs?”

Patience - “I would suggest that everyone gets the opportunity to acquire hand work because even now there is no job for anyone to do. So the best thing is for every young person to be able to learn a skill. So that once they are done with school they can start working and don’t need to wait for the government to employ them.”

Lois - “What job would you like to do once you graduate with mass communication?”

Patience - “Well I would like to open a fashion design, maybe like a company where I will train people to sew and design clothes and I will also be making clothes. But I wouldn’t mind



getting a government job also and one that won't be too time-consuming so that I can do both together. Maybe I will be able to edit stories and sell them to publicists for publication."

Lois - "Your dream job would be to have your own company but also help empower youth by training them to have the skills to work for you?"

Patience - "Yes ma'am."

Lois - "That works into your vision for the future to get more people to acquire skills! Are you interested in journalism and writing about what is happening in Nigeria?"

Patience - "I actually applied to journalism, but I didn't have any passion for it but I am developing one now."

Lois - "Right okay - you have said that the two main groups of children affected by what is happening are the IDPs and the almajiri children. Are there any other groups of children that have been affected?"

Patience - "They are the ones I can think of right now."

Lois - "Do you think that children that have felt traumatised and impacted by what happened at their schools have enough psychological help and support for them?"

Patience - "I don't think they have access to counsellors or therapists but there are some NGOs, I don't know if they do that, but there are some NGOs that provide care to the IDPs so maybe they also provide that."

Lois - "When you moved from Admawa to Maiduguri, did you ever stay in an IDP camp?"

Patience - "No I didn't but I spent 7 days in the bush by myself, so even worse than IDP camps, with plenty of people that I didn't even know."

Lois - "How did you find your family again?"

Patience - "After the 7th day, there were some security guards sent to my village and they were able to take us back to our village and I met my family again."

Lois - "So you hid in the bush for 7 days and then when you went home you all decided you were going to leave that day to Maiduguri?"

Patience - "Yes ma'am."

Lois - "So what happened that day to make you go to the bush? At the beginning..."

Patience - "The Boko Haram scared our village and there was shooting, they shot the men and caught the women. All the females were caught. So we ran away, those of us that were able to run, and we went to the bush. And some people were killed so we didn't leave the bush because they didn't leave the town, they were living in our village so we stayed there until the security came."

Lois - "The other people hiding in the bush with you, did they also decide to leave the village?"

Patience - "Not everybody left, only those who had the opportunity or places to go. For those that didn't have anywhere to go, they stayed back."

Lois - "Do you think that the people that stayed in the village feel safer now?"

Patience - "They still feel unsafe because the village still gets attacked every once in a while, especially during the celebrations like police marches."

Lois - "If you were to speak to someone who knows nothing about Nigeria or the situation that you face, what would you say to them?"

Patience - "I would say Nigeria, I would only be able to talk about the places I have lived, the Northeast. Some parts are still good in Nigeria and safe but the Northeast is really not safe because of the insurgents, though now it's better, we still have some peace but actually it's not that safe."

Lois - "So you think the change that needs to be made is that more education needs to be offered but also what do you think needs to be done to stop the insurgency?"

Patience - "I think the security should be more because before you could not move without being attacked because there were no securities on ground, but now there are more so when there is more security I think it will be okay."

Lois - "Thank you so much for talking to me and opening up about your experiences. I have not spoken to many women, we are the same age on different ends of the world and I feel very lucky to be able to hear your story."

Patience - "Thank you so much ma'am, I really appreciate it."

Obi - "Thank you so much Patience, we appreciate your time, especially at this late hour."