

## **Breaking the Cycle: Addressing Displacement, Educational Attainment, and Strengthening Governance for IDPs in Borno State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*The Boko Haram uprising in Nigeria has resulted in one of the most untainted humanitarian crises in the North-Eastern states, leading to the displacement of millions of citizens, including children. This has disrupted the education sector in Borno State, where internally displaced persons have limited access to education. This study sought to investigate the impact of displacement on education in Mafa IDP Camp, one of the largest IDP camps in Borno State, Nigeria. This study employed a mixed research approach, where quantitative and qualitative methods were employed. A total population of 135 was sampled, with a sample size of 48 respondents. It sought to investigate the challenges that internally displaced persons face in accessing education in the IDP Camp. According to the Ecological Systems Theory and Human Capital Theory, these challenges affect the education of internally displaced persons. This study sought to investigate how these challenges affect the education of internally displaced persons in Mafa IDP Camp and how governance can play a significant role in resolving these issues. Despite the efforts made by the Nigerian government and other non-governmental organizations in creating opportunities and supporting internally displaced persons in accessing education, the study established that these efforts are not enough, particularly due to funding, security, and funding issues. This study, therefore, recommended that there is a need to improve governance in education in IDP Camps, particularly in Mafa, in order to ensure that internally displaced persons have the right to education. By prioritizing education, the Nigerian government can ensure that internally displaced persons in Borno State can have an improved future.*

**Keywords:** Boko Haram, Displacement, Educational Attainment, Governance IDPs, Policy

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### **1. Introduction**

The right to education for children is a fundamental human right recognized globally, essential for personal development and the realization of other rights. Several international treaties, such as the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, provide this right. Despite these frameworks, millions of children continue to miss school as a result

of a variety of issues, such as systematic discrimination, armed conflict, and financial hardship. According to Education Cannot Wait (2022), an estimated 222 million crisis-affected children and adolescents are in need of education support, with 78 million currently out of school.

Armed conflicts have been a persistent issue globally, causing profound

disruptions in various sectors, including education. Educational systems in conflict-affected regions often face both direct and indirect damages, such as the destruction of infrastructure, loss of educators, economic hardships, and displacement of students and teachers. These difficulties impede not just short-term access to education but also have long-term effects on social and economic advancement. As conflicts continue to erupt around the world, understanding their impact on education becomes increasingly critical for devising effective interventions and policies (Salih, 2024).

Armed conflict significantly damages a nation's education sector. Such damage takes various forms, including both direct and indirect damage to educational facilities, actors, and students (Utsumi, 2022). For example, children are often recruited into the armed forces of states or non-state armed groups, as clearly seen in the city of Mosul (Afghanistan) when armed groups entered it in 2003, and both groups frequently demolish educational facilities or use them as a base for training. Education itself is also affected when it is used as a tool of war propaganda, discrimination, or incitement to hatred or may be completely stopped during armed conflict (F. Salih, 2022).

The impact conflict has had on the level of literacy within African countries is immense. In conflict affected area in Africa, only about 66% of young adults and 55% of adults are literate as compared to non-conflict-ridden countries who record a statistic of 93% for the former and 85% for the latter. The progress of education in African countries has been interrupted due to violent conflicts. For instance, from 1977 to 1992 in Mozambique, the civil war created 5.3-year loss of schooling for children and young adults (Adebayo, 2018, p. 17).

The ongoing conflict in Northeast Nigeria, primarily driven by the Boko Haram

insurgency, has led to one of the most severe humanitarian crises in the region. Millions have been displaced, with an estimated 2.7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in precarious conditions (IDMC, 2022). Among these displaced populations, children bear the brunt of the conflict, particularly in terms of their educational attainment. The disruption of formal education due to violence, school closures, and the destruction of educational infrastructure has created significant barriers to learning for children in IDP camps.

Access to education is more than just a fundamental human right; it is critical for children's development and future prospects. However, the prevailing insecurity in Northeast Nigeria has led to overcrowded makeshift classrooms, shortages of educational materials, and a lack of qualified teachers, all of which severely compromise the quality of education (UNICEF, 2020). Children born in the early period of these conflicts pursue the entirety of their compulsory education (if they could have any) during the conflict. Many other children are also deprived of the opportunity to be educated for a long time. Thus, what is important is a discussion focusing on children who live and grow up in these areas: how their education is affected during the armed conflict, and what factors contribute to the provision of education in such a situation.

According to reports, parents are pulling their children out of school in large numbers, and teachers are resigning or leaving the field in large numbers. Schools and government officials report that the impact of attacks on education on learning outcomes for learners has been, at best, an extension of their year of graduation; or, at worst, an outright truncation of their educational pursuits (Musa, 2023). Beyond just the short-term consequences of interrupted education, conflict affects educational attainment over the long run by

affecting the socioeconomic growth of the region. In a context where educational inequalities are aggravated by gender, socio-economic status, and geographic location, the plight of children in IDP camps is particularly alarming.

### **1.2 Statement of the problem**

The ongoing Boko Haram uprising has led to a significant disruption of education in the region. Millions of children, who are currently in internally displaced persons camps such as Mafa, are missing out on quality and consistent education due to the ongoing war in the region (Salih, 2021). The destruction of schools, a lack of qualified teachers, and a large student population are all part of the larger problem, which is a result of the ongoing Boko Haram uprising in the region (UNICEF, 2020). These children are facing a lot of challenges in accessing education, which is a fundamental right, and this limits their future prospects and opportunities, leading to a cycle of poverty and instability in the region (Musa, 2023). Although various attempts by both the government and humanitarian agencies to provide educational support for displaced children have been made, it is evident that the attempts have been ineffective in addressing the need for education among children in the IDP camps in the region. Despite the attempts, the need for education among children in the IDP camps is still very high, and many of them are missing out due to the ongoing Boko Haram uprising in the region (Eke & Omotola, 2022).

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

- a) To evaluate the impact of the ongoing Boko Haram uprising on the education of children in the Mafa IDP camp.
- b) To investigate the challenges that are being experienced by displaced children in accessing education in the region.
- c) To explore the potential solutions that could be used to ensure that children in the

Mafa IDP camp have access to quality education.

- d) To evaluate the role played by both the state and federal governments, as well as NGOs, in providing educational opportunities for children in IDP camps.

### **1.4 Theoretical Framework:**

#### **1.4.1 Structural Violence Theory**

The research was carried out to understand the experiences of internally displaced children in the camps using the Structural Violence Theory. Johan Galtung (1969) described structural violence as various ways through which society hurts people through various structures and institutions. Unlike direct or physical violence, structural violence is not visible to the bare eye because it is embedded in the political, social, and economic systems of a given society. Structural violence is a type of violence in which people are subtly denied their basic needs. The theory was originally used to understand the experiences of marginalized people in society, including internally displaced people.

For example, in the Mafa IDP camp, structural violence is demonstrated by poor educational systems, poor school infrastructure, poor teacher quality, and poor government and NGO responses. For instance, whereas Boko Haram's activities are a demonstration of direct violence, poor government and school responses to displaced children's educational needs demonstrate structural violence, subtly depriving internally displaced children in the region of their right to education (Salih, 2021). The theory is quite useful in understanding the experiences of internally displaced children in the region. The Structural Violence Theory is consistent with other theories, including Ecological Systems Theory and Human Capital Theory.

## **2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework.**

### **2.1 Armed Conflict**

Armed conflict, a process that has remained a constant in human history, has a significant impact on a society, especially in the education sector. Conflict not only impacts the political and economic structures of a particular country but also impacts the social structures of a society, with children bearing the greatest burden. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), armed conflicts can be classified as international armed conflicts (IAC), which occur between two or more states, and non-international armed conflicts (NIAC), which involve the government and non-governmental armed groups (ICRC, 2008). The Boko Haram conflict in the northeastern part of Nigeria can be classified as a NIAC because of the armed conflict between Boko Haram fighters and the Nigerian government forces, which have led to displacement in the region and impacted various sectors of the country, including education (Alaku & Nwankwo, 2017).

The impact of armed conflict on children's education can be both direct and indirect. First, the destruction of schools and the killing or displacement of teachers can impact the education of children in a particular region. Second, children may also undergo psychological trauma because of the armed conflict in a particular region or country, which may impact their cognitive development and hinder their learning abilities (Salih, 2021). Displacement of children because of armed conflict in a particular region or country may also impact their education because of the lack of social structures in the new environment (Olanrewaju et al., 2018).

### **2.2 Displacement**

Displacement, as a concept, refers to the forced movement of people from their usual habitats due to armed conflicts, insecurity, and human rights abuse (IDMC,

2022; UNHCR, 2021). In the case of Borno State in Nigeria, the armed conflict caused by the Boko Haram insurgency has caused a lot of displacement. The insurgency has caused the displacement of children from their homes. Such displacement impacts the education of children (Olanrewaju et al., 2018; Salih, 2021). Displacement leads to the formation of internally displaced persons camps. Such camps are characterized by a lack of adequate facilities and a lack of support from the government (Ferris, 2011). Displacement is a social construct. Therefore, the concept of displacement encompasses the complexities associated with the displacement of people.

### **2.3 Governance**

In this study, governance refers to the processes, practices, and institutions through which public authority is exercised, and through which public resources are managed, public services are delivered, and societal well-being is promoted and sustained (Kaufmann et al., 2011; World Bank, 2020). In the case of IDPs in Borno State, governance refers to the coordination and implementation of educational policies by government agencies and the monitoring of interventions by non-governmental organizations, as indicated by Eke & Omotola (2022).

education, provision of qualified teachers, learning infrastructure, and accountability in resource allocation. On the other hand, poor governance results in systemic issues like inadequate funding, insufficient learning facilities, and disjointed interventions, thereby worsening the situation of educational deprivation faced by these internally displaced children.

### **2.4 Educational Attainment**

Educational attainment is defined as “the highest level of education that an individual has completed.” It is an important aspect that determines an individual’s social and economic mobility

and directly influences an individual's future prospects (Baker et al., 2020). In areas like northeastern Nigeria, where conflicts are rife, the educational attainment level is substantially lower compared to areas not affected by conflicts. This is due to impediments like damaged schools, lack of teachers, and limited availability of learning resources (Eke & Omotola, 2022).

The educational attainment level of internally displaced children in IDP camps is further hampered by issues like classroom congestion, inadequate facilities, and emotional distress from living in conflict zones. According to UNESCO research (2019), "a stable education system is critical in mitigating the impact of conflict on children's development." It was further emphasized that if education is disrupted, these children might end up in poverty and unemployment in the future, thereby leading to issues like social inequality and underdevelopment in these regions (Dryden-Peterson, 2016).

### **2.5 Conflict in North-East Nigeria**

The north-east region has been greatly affected by the activities of Boko Haram. The activities of Boko Haram include attacking military and civilian targets such as schools. As a result, millions of people have been displaced (UNHCR, 2021). Borno is one of the states in the north-east region where Mafa IDP camp is located. This region has been greatly affected by Boko Haram activities, with approximately 2.7 million displaced persons living in difficult conditions (IDMC, 2022). This region has experienced a total collapse in the educational sector due to the destruction of schools by Boko Haram and the abduction of children to join the armed group (Musa, 2023).

Besides the destruction of schools, the insecurity situation has made it difficult for displaced children to attend classes in other towns or villages. This has led to a huge

gap in children's education, which will be a major problem in the future (Eke & Omotola, 2022).

### **2.6 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)**

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are persons who have been forced from their homes due to armed conflicts and violence, but are still within the boundaries of their country of origin. According to the United Nations' Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement of 2004, IDPs are persons who have been displaced from their homes due to armed conflicts, natural disasters, and gross violations of human rights, but are still within the boundaries of their country of origin. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Nigeria has the highest number of IDPs in the world, with over 3 million people displaced due to the Boko Haram crisis in the country.

IDPs face a number of challenges, and one of the greatest is the lack of access to basic services such as healthcare, potable water, and, most importantly, education. Ferris (2011) argues that while refugees are protected by international law, IDPs are left to the mercy of their governments, which are usually unable to provide the necessary support and protection, especially in a war zone. In areas such as northeastern Nigeria, where the government is unable to provide the necessary services due to the ongoing crisis, IDPs are left with no choice but to rely on humanitarian agencies and temporary solutions, as indicated by UNICEF (2020).

### **2.7 Right to Education for Internally Displaced People**

In light of these challenges, various programs have been put in place to offer displaced children educational opportunities. The Safe Schools Initiative, which was launched in Nigeria in 2014, is one program that seeks to ensure that schools are protected from attacks and that children in conflict areas have a safe

environment to learn (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2018). However, the programs face various challenges that limit their scope and effectiveness, including lack of funding and infrastructure (Fleet & Tikolo, 2015).

### **2.8 Challenges to Access to Quality Education for Internally Displaced Persons**

There are various challenges that IDPs face in their access to quality education. These challenges range from inadequate infrastructure, overcrowding, inadequate learning materials, as well as a lack of qualified teachers (Mendenhall et al., 2019). In addition, the psychological trauma that is experienced by IDP children, such as violence and loss of loved ones, also contributes to their lack of concentration in class (Davies, 2017).

Security challenges also form a major barrier to IDP children's access to quality education. In most IDP camps, there is a high likelihood of abductions, sexual harassment, as well as exploitation of girls by non-state actors. In this case, going to school is a dangerous activity for IDP children (Dryden-Peterson, 2010). These are some of the major challenges that IDP children face in their access to quality education. These challenges are responsible for the low level of educational achievement that is witnessed among IDP children in northeastern Nigeria

### **3. Methodology**

This research design employed mixed methods, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect comprehensive data on the challenges of educational attainment among children in the Mafa IDP camp in Borno State.

The target population of the research consisted of teachers, camp administrators, camp staff, and children in the Mafa IDP camp of a total of 135. The research was conducted in the IDP camp because it is one of the biggest IDP camps in Borno

State and provides a representative sample of the problems facing IDPs in other camps. A total of 11 teachers were surveyed to find their opinions on the impact of the conflict on the achievement of education and the provision of resources in the IDP camp. Also, a total of 8 camp administrators from the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) were interviewed in order to find their opinions on the management of education in the IDP camp. Finally, a total of 116 school children from the IDP camp were selected through focus group discussions in order to find their opinions on their educational experiences in the IDP camp.

The sample of the population is 48 which was determined through the use of a random sample size based on the purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was the most suitable sampling technique because it allowed the research team to interview people with particular knowledge and expertise in the area of education in the Mafa IDP camp. Teachers were selected because of their role in educating displaced children in the IDP camp. Similarly, the research team selected the camp administrators because of their role in managing educational programs in the IDP camp. Finally, the children selected through focus group discussions were selected based on their age and school attendance status in the IDP camp.

### **4. Discussion of Findings**

#### **4.1 Impact of Boko Haram Insurgency on Educational Continuity**

The study reveals that the Boko Haram insurgency has had a profound and lasting impact on the educational experiences of children in Mafa IDP camp. The destruction of schools, displacement of families, and ongoing insecurity have disrupted the continuity of education, leaving many children with interrupted schooling. Interviews with teachers and camp administrators highlighted that

children who previously attended regular schooling have lost years of learning, and many now struggle to catch up with their peers. Psychological trauma from exposure to violence and displacement was consistently reported as a major barrier to learning, affecting children's concentration, motivation, and overall academic performance.

#### **4.2 Barriers to Educational Attainment in Mafa IDP Camp**

Several challenges hinder educational attainment in the camp. Overcrowded classrooms, often with more than sixty students per class, make it difficult for teachers to provide individualized attention. The shortage of qualified teachers was noted by both administrators and educators, many of whom had fled the region due to insecurity. Children themselves expressed frustration during focus group discussions, describing inadequate infrastructure, insufficient learning materials, and hunger as major barriers to their learning. The combination of these factors limits not only attendance but also engagement and comprehension, reducing the effectiveness of available educational programs

Armed conflict has severely disrupted the educational system in the region, leaving many children out of school or with interrupted education. The lack of adequate infrastructure, the shortage of qualified teachers, and ongoing insecurity continue to hinder children's educational attainment in the camp.

#### **4.3 Assessment of Government and NGO Interventions**

Government and NGO interventions, while present, were found to be insufficient. Temporary learning centers, mobile schools, and the provision of teaching materials have alleviated some challenges, but the scale of displacement and resource constraints limit their reach. Interviews with camp administrators indicated that these programs are often short-term and

lack sustainability. Children noted that while they attend classes regularly, the quality of education is compromised by overcrowding, lack of materials, and the absence of specialized support for trauma-affected students.

Despite the efforts of the Nigerian government and international organizations, the interventions have been inadequate to address the growing educational needs of displaced children.

#### **4.2 Implications for Policy and Sustainable Solutions**

Overall, the findings suggest that without more coordinated and adequately resourced interventions, displaced children in Mafa IDP camp will continue to face significant educational deprivation, perpetuating cycles of poverty and social exclusion. The findings of this study highlight the significant barriers that displaced children in Mafa IDP camp face in accessing quality education. A more coordinated and sustainable approach is needed to ensure that displaced children have access to quality education, which is crucial for their long-term development and the socio-economic integration of IDPs.

### **5. Conclusion and Recommendation**

In conclusion, conflict has had a major negative effect on the education of IDP children. The challenges that IDP children witness are numerous. These challenges have created a barrier to their access to quality education. Therefore, a collaborative effort must be made by various stakeholders to ensure that IDP children are provided with the quality education that they deserve. This will ensure that IDP children can break free from the cycle of poverty that has been created by displacement. In addition, it will ensure that IDP children are able to break free from the cycle of poverty that has been created by displacement.

The role of the government and NGO interventions, though present, was not found to be adequate. The intervention of temporary learning centers, mobile schools, and the provision of materials to the children has somewhat reduced the problem. However, the study findings revealed that the intervention is not long-lasting. The children in the camp have complained that though they are attending classes regularly, the quality of education is poor. The study findings reveal that the children in the Mafa IDP camp are likely to remain educationally deprived without a more coordinated and adequate intervention from the government and other stakeholders.

The findings of the study reveal the challenges that the displaced children in the Mafa IDP camp are facing in accessing quality education. The armed conflict in the region has disrupted the education system. The children are either not going to school or are not accessing quality education. The lack of adequate facilities and the lack of qualified teachers are the main challenges that the children in the region are facing.

The intervention of the Nigerian government and other international stakeholders in the education sector of the displaced children in the Mafa IDP camp is not adequate. A more coordinated intervention is required to ensure that the displaced children access quality education. Education is a crucial aspect of the development of the children in the

camp. It is essential in the socio-economic development of the children.

The following recommendations are made:

1. Increase Government Investment: The Nigerian government should invest more in education in IDP camps by constructing permanent schools and providing learning materials.
2. Teacher Training and Recruitment: There is an urgent need to recruit and train teachers who specialize in IDP camps. This involves training teachers on how to address the needs of displaced children.
3. Security and Safe Learning Environments: There is a need to ensure that there is security within and around schools within IDP camps to ensure that children can attend school without fear of being harmed.
4. NGO Collaboration: There is a need for NGOs to collaborate with the government to ensure that children within IDP camps are provided with educational services that are not only short-term measures. This can be achieved through collaborating with NGOs to ensure that children are provided with mobile schools and scholarships to help them join secondary and tertiary institutions.
5. Psychosocial Support: Due to the trauma experienced by displaced children, psychosocial support is required to ensure that children are provided with counseling services to improve their emotional well-being.

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