

Impact of Insecurity on Primary School Pupils' Enrolment (Akor & Dajo 2022)

Impact of Insecurity on Primary School Pupils' Enrolment in Zamfara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

There is a general consensus about the indispensable role of education in the development of human society. This is because the advancement of any nation is tied to its level of education. Investment in primary education is particularly critical because it is the foundation upon which other levels of education are built. A shoddy primary school education foundation negatively affects other stages of a child's education. That explains why the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international treaties categorized education as a fundamental human right and emphasized the need for unfettered access to quality education by children, worldwide. Nigeria's Universal Basic Education Act of 2004, meant to ensure that children have unhindered access to formal basic education underscores the importance the country attaches to education. This paper examined the impact of insecurity on primary school pupils' enrolment in Zamfara State. Secondary data were sourced from the State's Universal State Universal Basic Education Board (ZSUBEB) and quantitatively analysed. The paper observed that over the past one decade, the rising incidence of banditry, kidnapping, cattle rustling and other forms of insecurity have resulted in 422,213 out-of-school children in Zamfara State. The research also revealed that as a result of insecurity, the state witnessed the lowest number of female enrolment of 38.26% in Nigeria. The paper recommends heavy investment in primary education, grouping of schools in rural communities into clusters under close security watch to boost attendance and engagement of religious and community leaders to educate parents on the dangers of withdrawing girl-children from school.

Keywords: Education, Enrolment, Girl-child, Insecurity, School

Introduction

Education is one of the key indicators and drivers of development. Therefore, any nation that desires to make significant progress in its socio-economic development must make education a top priority. Primary education refers to the education given to children aged 6 to 12 years (National Policy on Education, [NPE], 2013). The importance of primary education has been succinctly captured by the NPE (2004) when it emphasized that "Since the rest of the education system is built up on it; the primary level is the key to the success or failure of the whole system" (p.14). This means that if the primary school education foundation is defective, it would in all likelihood, negatively affect the other stages of education of the child.



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It is, perhaps, in recognition of the primacy of primary school education to the society that Article 26 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1948) stated that:

Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit (p.5).

Apart from the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, other international human rights treaties such as the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981) also categorize education as a fundamental human right. Other International treaties such as Education for All (EFA, 1990) and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals Report (MDGs, 2011) which later metamorphosed into United Sustainable Development Goals (SDG, 2015) also underscored the need for children all over the world to have access to quality education. Nigeria, which is a signatory to the above international treaties, has also domesticated same.

Section 18 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution (as amended) emphasized that it is the responsibility of the government to design and implement policies that will give every Nigerian equal access to educational opportunities. In addition, the Universal Basic Education Act was passed into law in Nigeria in 2004 to ensure that children have unhindered access to 9 years of formal education basic education (i.e. 6 years primary and 3 years junior secondary). Other efforts to increase school enrolment include the integration of the Almajirai system of education in Northern Nigeria into the Universal Basic Education Programme by the administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan and President Muhammadu Buhari government's introduction of the home grown school feeding programme for primary school pupils across the country (Okunola, 2022).

In spite of the above efforts to ensure unfettered access to education, the primary educational system in Nigeria has collapsed due to decades of inadequate funding, corruption, shortage of competent and motivated staff, dilapidated and insufficient infrastructure, non-functional curricula and outdated instructional methods (Odeleye, 2009). The systematic and deliberate plan by the ruling elites to destroy the primary education system has given rise to the proliferation of overrated private primary schools with exorbitant fees which is out of the reach of many Nigerians. More importantly, in the past one decade, insecurity appears to have overshadowed all other challenges confronting the education sector in Zamfara State and Nigeria in general. According to the SBMorgan Intelligence report, in a space of six years starting from April 4th 2016 when 276 secondary school girls aged between 16 to 18 were abducted by the Boko Haram Islamist terrorist group in Chibok community in Borno State to the attack on Bakin Ladi in Plateau on the 12th of January, 2021, there have been 28 similar assaults on schools in Nigeria (Bailey, 2022).

In Zamfara State, kidnapping of school children has continued to be on the upward swing. For example, on February 26, 2021, nearly 200 students of the Government Girls' Secondary School Jangebe, Zamfara State, Nigeria, were kidnapped (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2021). Similarly, bandits kidnapped 75 students from Government Secondary School, Kaya in Maradun Local Government Area of the State on September 1, 2021 (Punch Newspaper, 2021). Bandits also abducted 15 students and four staff members from the Zamfara State College



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of Agriculture and Animal Science, Bakura on August 16, 2021 (Babangida, 2021). As recently as Tuesday, April 12, 2022, several students of the Zamfara State College of Health Technology, Tsafe, in Tsafe Local Government Area, including female students living off campus, were abducted by terrorists who raided the town.

The consequences of insecurity on education are enormous. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2021), hostilities often leads to the destruction and closure of schools, making it difficult or impossible for children to attend school. As families flee the conflict, displaced children often lack access to education (Christopher & Annan, cited in UNDP, 2021). Even children who have not been displaced may stop attending school due to the risk of abduction (Justino, cited in UNDP, 2021). It has also been established that conflict limits educational attainment through direct attacks on facilities, causing displacement, and instilling fear in students and parents (Olowoselu, e'tal, cited in UNDP, 2021). It is in the light of the above that this paper examines the impact of insecurity on Primary School Enrolment in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Zamfara is one of the seven States in North Western Nigeria that has come under intense spotlight over the years as a result of various forms of insecurity. As a matter of fact, the State was ranked as the second most dangerous in Nigeria after Borno State due to the heinous activities of bandits, kidnappers and other forms of violence (Nigeria Watch, 2018). The spate of insecurity in Zamfara State is exacerbated by the uncontrolled influx of illicit small arms and light weapons due to the porous nature of Nigerian borders. The activities of bandits in the State have led to kidnapping, displacement of people, killing and destruction of lives and property and general dislocation of the social and economic lives of the people.

Efforts made by both the Federal and Zamfara State governments to address the problem of insecurity in the State have not yielded the desired results. For example, at the Federal level, several military operations such as *Operation Sharan Daji*, *Harbin Daji*, *Harbin kunama* etc were launched to tackle various forms of crime in rural communities in Zamfara State with little success. As a matter of fact, the Amnesty International (AI, 2018) alleged that the deployment of military fire power to address the problem contributed in exacerbating the security crisis in the State. The Zamfara State Government on its part, granted amnesty to bandits with the hope that they would renounce banditry and embrace peace without any meaningful progress. The inability of both the Federal and State governments to halt the deteriorating state of insecurity has prompted local communities to resort to self-help by forming a vigilante group code named *Yansakai*, to contain the activities of bandits, all to no avail.

In spite of these efforts, the problem of insecurity has continued to rise with devastating consequences on the education sector. For example, on March 3, 2021, gunmen adducted 317 school girls in Talata-Mafara Local Government Area of Zamfara State. Besides the kidnapping of school children, educational infrastructures and teachers have also been targets of attack by bandits. This has created enormous fear in parents and guardians. The conflict came to a head when the government shutdown schools for four months (from September, 2021 to January 17, 2022). It is against this back drop that this research examines the impact of insecurity on primary school pupils' enrolment in Zamfara State.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided the study:

1. To examine the impact of insecurity on primary school pupils' enrolment in Zamfara State.
2. To determine the impact of insecurity on the enrolment of new intakes into primary schools in Zamfara State

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3. To determine gender difference in the impact of insecurity on the enrolment of primary school pupils in Zamfara State.

Research Questions

1. What is the impact of insecurity on primary school pupils' enrolment in Zamfara State?
2. What is the impact of insecurity on the enrolment of new intakes into primary schools in Zamfara State?
3. Is there gender difference in the impact of insecurity on the enrolment of primary school pupils in Zamfara State?

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant gender difference in the impact of insecurity on enrolment of primary school pupils in Zamfara State

Methodology

The research design for the study was descriptive research design. The location of the study is Zamfara State. Zamfara State was created in 1996 with Gusau as its capital. Zamfara State has fourteen Local Government Areas namely, Gusau, Tsafe, Anka, Bakura, Bungudu, Bukuyum and Birnin-Magaji. Others are Maradun, Talata-Mafara, Shinkafi, Maru, Kaura-Namoda, Zurmi and Gumi. According to the Zamfara State Universal Basic Educational Board (ZSUBEB, 2020), the population of primary school pupils in the state is 589,443. Secondary data on enrolment of pupils that was sourced from the ZSUBEB from 2013 to 2020 were purposively used as sample (589,443) and the main data for the study. The data collected were organized into seven sessions and coded as 2013/2014, 2014/2015, 2015/2016, 2016/2017, 2017/2018, 2018/2019 and 2019/2020. Thereafter, bar graphs of the frequencies of enrolments were processed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 21 software. The results of the analysis were presented in bar charts and used to answer the research questions. The hypothesis of the study was tested using t-test statistics at 0.05 significance.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the impact of insecurity on primary school pupils' enrolment in Zamfara State?

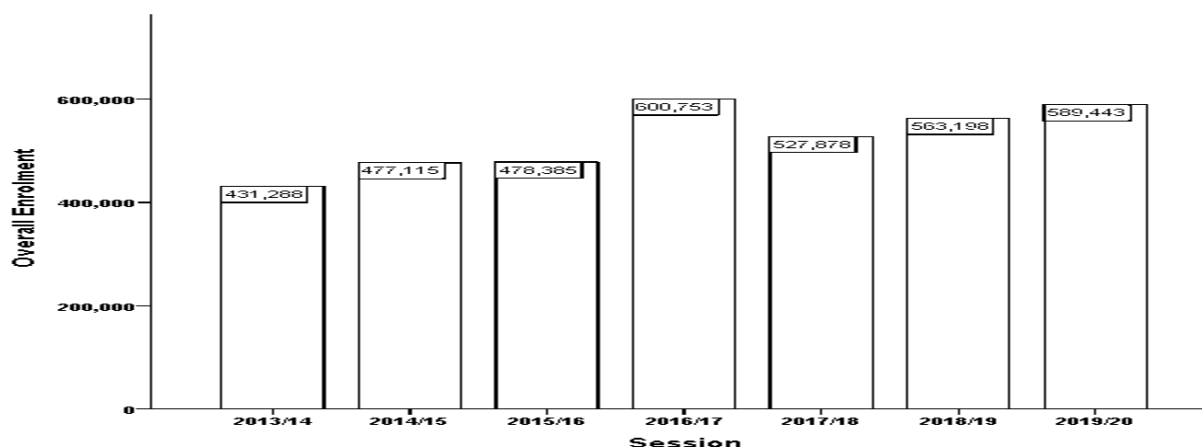


Figure 1: Impact of insecurity on primary school pupils' enrolment in Zamfara State

Source: Zamfara State Universal Basic Educational Board (ZSUBEB, 2013-2020)

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Data in figure 1 showed that on a general note, the total number of children enrolled in primary schools in Zamfara State increased from 431,288 in 2014 to 589,443 in 2020. The data also showed some disparities in enrolment. For instance, while school enrolment peaked in the 2016/2017 academic session with 600,753 pupils, the trend however, began to contract from 2017 to 2020, with enrolment figures of 527,878; 563,198 and 589,443, in that order, respectively. The somewhat downward slide in primary school enrolment from the 2017/2018, 2018/2019 to the 2019/2020 academic sessions, as a result of insecurity, is a major cause for concern when juxtaposed against the most recent data released by the National Bureau of Statistic (2020), which put the total number of out-of-school children in Zamfara State as at 2018 at 422,213.

Research Question 2

What is the Impact of insecurity on the trend of school enrolment for new intakes in primary schools in Zamfara State?

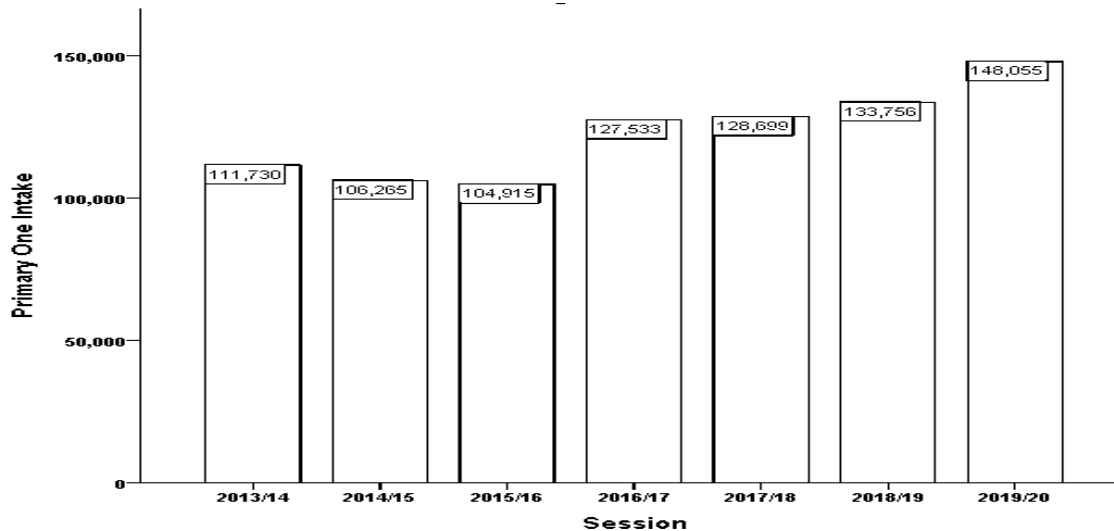


Figure 2: Impact of insecurity on the trend of school enrolment for new intakes in primary schools in Zamfara State

Source: Zamfara State Universal Basic Educational Board (ZSUBEB, 2013-2020)

The data in figure 2 show that there has been a steady increase in the number of school enrolment for new intakes in primary schools in Zamfara State. The data also indicated that the number of new intakes peaked at 127, 533 in the 2016/2017 academic session when compared to the enrolment figures of 111,730; 106,265 and 104,915, for the 2013/14; 2014/15 and 2015/16 academic sessions, respectively. It is important to note that, it is not a coincidence that the number of new intakes got to the zenith in the 2016/2017 academic session. The reason is that it was during the same period (2016) that President Muhammadu Buhari visited Zamfara State and launched the operation *Harbin Kunama* military intervention with a charge to security agencies to flush out bandits and cattle rustlers terrorising the State. The visit could have motivated the security agencies to intensify efforts in the fight against banditry in the State within the period under review. What can be inferred from the foregoing is that addressing insecurity is critical in boosting the confidence of parents and guardians to send their children to school.

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Research Question 3

Is there gender difference in the impact of insecurity on the enrolment of primary school pupils in Zamfara State?

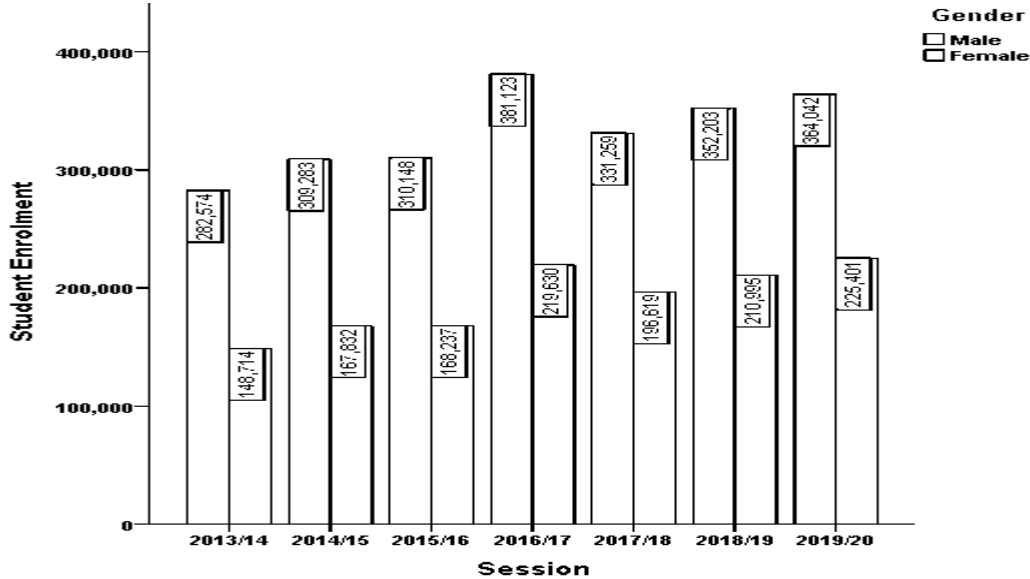


Figure 3: School Enrolment by Gender in Primary Schools in Zamfara State.

Source: Zamfara State Universal Basic Educational Board (ZSUBEB, 2013-2020)

The data in figure 3 showed that school enrolment for males was higher than the females within the period under review. This is not surprising because, data released by the National Bureau of Statistics (2020) confirmed that Zamfara State had the lowest female enrolment of 38.26% in Nigeria in 2018. The above disparity in gender enrolment does not augur well for the girl-child education programme because fewer than 3 women in every 10 are literate in Zamfara State (NBS, 2020). The implication of above figures on school enrolment is that apart from the socio-cultural and economic factors which serve as fetters to girl-child education in Zamfara and other states in Northern Nigeria, the current spate of insecurity could force many young girls to drop out of school and go into early marriage. Similarly, some parents who desire to send their children to school even in the face of the prevailing insecurity, may be incapacitated by the destruction of their means of livelihood by bandits and kidnappers.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant gender difference in the impact of insecurity on enrolment of primary school pupils in Zamfara State

Table 1: t-test showing gender difference in the impact of insecurity on enrolment of primary school pupils in Zamfara State

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
VAR. Male	7	332947.43	34829.794	13164.425	8.206	.000
Female	7	191061.14	29657.683	11209.550		

The t-test result shows that the p-value of 0.00 is an indication that there is a significant difference between the enrolment of males and females in the midst of insecurity in Zamfara State.



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Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant gender difference in the impact of insecurity on enrolment of primary school pupils in Zamfara State was rejected and the alternative hypothesis which states that there is a significant gender difference in the impact of insecurity on enrolment of primary school pupils in Zamfara State was accepted. This coheres with the data released by the National Bureau of Statistics (2020) which confirmed that Zamfara State had the lowest female enrolment of 38.26% in Nigeria in 2018 and even presently.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the analyses of secondary data obtained from the Zamfara State Universal Basic Education Board, covering a seven year period (2013 to 2020), the study observed that there has been a steady increase in primary school pupils' enrolment from the 2013/2014 session and peaked in 2016/2017 academic session. Enrolment however nose-dived from the 2017/2018 to the 2019/2020 academic sessions. A plausible explanation for the steady increase in general school enrolment in the preceding years, hitting a zenith in the 2016/2017 academic session may not be far from the fact that it was in 2016 that President Muhammadu Buhari launched a kinetic military operation to address the problem of banditry, cattle rustling and other forms of criminality in the troubled State. Regrettably, one year after the military exercise, school enrolment began to decline, following the resurgence of a terrifying spike in cases of banditry, kidnapping and general insecurity, the climax of which forced the Zamfara State Government to order a five-month state-wide shut down of all public and private primary and secondary schools from September 2021 to January 17, 2022.

It is obvious that there has been a steady increase in the number of school enrolment for new intakes in primary schools in Zamfara State. While this is worthy of commendation there is however, a need for the state government and other stake holders in the educational sector to do more to sustain or even improve on the tempo. This is against the backdrop of the fact that there are still 422, 213 out of school children in the state. Therefore, efforts must be put in place by all stakeholders to convince parents to send their children to school,

Lastly, the study also observed that female children are still lagging behind the males in terms of enrolment. While socio-cultural and economic impediments had been the major obstacles to girl-child education in Zamfara state, the spate of insecurity which gripped the State since 1999, has further negatively compounded access to formal education in the State and Nigeria in general. Beyond the issue of insecurity and socio-cultural and economic barriers, investment in girl-child education has not received the desired attention in Zamfara State. For example, a study conducted by BudiT (2020), a non-governmental organization that specializes in tracking the implementation of state budgets across the 36 states of the Federation revealed that, in the 2020 budget, Zamfara State earmarked N41.73billion (60.46%) to capital expenditure from which a paltry 1.61% was spent on education. In other words, out of the N41.73billion Naira earmarked for capital expenditure, only N667.68million was spent education. However, the sum of N1.5billion was expended on mundane issues such as recreation, culture and religion. It may therefore be safe to say that the lack of priority given to education by the Zamfara State Government coupled with the never-ending spate of insecurity has negatively affected school enrolment especially at the primary school level in the State.

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Conclusion

This paper interrogated the effect of insecurity on primary school pupils' enrolment in Zamfara State. Data for the study were obtained from the Zamfara State Universal Basic Education Board. The paper posed a number of questions among them: what is the impact of insecurity on primary school pupils' enrolment in Zamfara State, what is the impact of insecurity on the enrolment of new intakes into primary schools in Zamfara State and what is the impact of insecurity on primary school pupils' enrolment by gender in primary schools in Zamfara State?

The study noted that there was a gradual improvement in primary school pupils' enrolment in the State from the 2013/2014 through the 2014/2015 sessions and peaked at the 2016/2017 academic session. This owed largely to the launch of a presidential security initiative tagged operation Harbin Kunama. However, enrolment began to dip from the 2017/2018 to the 2019/2020 academic sessions as a result of the resurgence of insecurity, leading to a five-month closure of all public and private primary and secondary schools from September 2021 to January 17, 2022.

The study further noted that apart from the age-long socio-cultural and other economic factors which hitherto affected primary school enrolment in Zamfara State, the unset of insecurity also took a negative toll on female enrolment as many parents resorted to withdrawing their girl-children from school into early marriage.

Recommendations

1. Insecurity still remains the major obstacle against access to quality education in Northern Nigeria generally and Zamfara State, in particular. Therefore, governments of the aforementioned jurisdictions must ensure that school children, teachers and educational infrastructure are adequately protected. This can be achieved by grouping schools, especially those in rural communities into clusters under close security watch to boost attendance, instead of the present arrangement where schools are scattered in different locations
2. Education requires huge investment. As a result, the Zamfara State government and indeed, those in other parts of Nigeria, should invest more in primary education to ensure that every child has a sound footing at that level of education. This can be achieved by ensuring the effective deployment of the 26% budgetary allocation recommended by the UNESCO.
3. Socio-cultural impediments have been identified as major obstacles to girl-child education in Northern Nigeria, Zamfara State, inclusive. While there are laws in place to punish parents who refuse to send their children to school or withdraw female children for early marriage, such legal instruments have proven ineffectual. It is therefore, necessary to enlist the support of religious and community leaders to address the imbalance in girl-child education, particularly in Zamfara State.

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