

African Journal for the Psychological Studies of Social Issues

Volume 28 Number 4, October/November, 2025 Edition

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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INSURGENCY AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NORTH EAST GEO-POLITICAL ZONE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the relationship between insurgency and academic achievement of public senior secondary school students in North East Geo-political Zone, Nigeria. Correlation research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 173,567 SS2 students and a sample size of 540 students were used for this study. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to compose the sample. Two research questions were answered while two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Three instruments were used to collect data. Questionnaire on Insurgency (QOI), Mathematics Achievement Test (MAT), and English Language Achievement Test (ELAT). The instruments yielded validity indices of 0.86 for questionnaire on insurgency (QOI), 0.83 for Mathematics Achievement Test (MAT), and 0.82 for English Language Achievement Test (ELAT) with reliability Coefficients of 0.77, 0.74 and 0.78 respectively. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research questions and also tested the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. It was found that a significant negative relationship between insurgency and academic achievement of public senior secondary schools in North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria. It also showed a significant negative relationship between banditry and academic achievement of public senior secondary school students in North East Geo-political Zone, Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Government and Stakeholders should implement robust security measures and collaborate with local and national authorities to combat the effect of insurgency in the North East Geo-political Zone. The study concluded that Boko Haram and banditry activities greatly relate with students' academic achievement.

Key Words: Insurgency, Academic Achievement, Students, Environment, Psychological Trauma

INTRODUCTION

The Importance of Education in Nigeria, just like in many other parts of the world, is indeed profound and multifaceted. Education opens doors to better job opportunities, higher salaries, and economic stability. Education fosters personal growth, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. In the context of Nigeria, education is particularly valued as a means of achieving the 'Nigeria Dreams' - a concept that emphasizes the idea that anyone, regardless of their background, can succeed through hard work and determination (Abimbola, 2021).

Education is a deliberate and organized process of nurturing and shaping young minds to prepare them for active participation in society. It fosters learning by equipping individuals with knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and morals that guide their personal and social development (Okoro, 2021). This process usually takes place within a defined timeframe, during which learners are exposed to structured instruction, interactive experiences, and guided practice. At

the end of each stage, learners are evaluated to determine the extent of knowledge and skills acquired, making assessment an integral part of the educational journey. Beyond personal enrichment, education is widely recognized as a transformative tool that enhances human potential, strengthens competence, and contributes significantly to the growth and stability of society. Maintaining steady improving intellectual capacity, critical thinking, and creativity, education drives innovation, economic progress, and social cohesion. It is therefore closely monitored and assessed to ensure that its goals are effectively realized (Ibrahim, 2020). Since these goals are ultimately reflected in learners' achievement, the concept of academic achievement becomes central in understanding how education fulfills its intended purpose.

The attainment of set educational objectives is periodically assessed to determine the grade or level of mastery students have reached during the process of learning. Academic achievement therefore reflects the degree of knowledge and skills acquired by learners within the teaching and learning process. Schools offer a wide range of subjects, yet English Language and Mathematics stand out as core subjects for all students, regardless of their vocational interests or career aspirations. These foundational subjects serve as the bedrock for others, as Mathematics enhances logical reasoning and problem-solving, while English Language develops proficiency in grammar, vocabulary, and written expression (Adeyemi, 2020). Both subjects provide essential skills for grasping and applying concepts across other disciplines, making them indispensable to holistic learning (Okoro & Musa, 2021). Consequently, English and Mathematics anchor the school curriculum by fostering comprehension, assimilation, and effective communication of knowledge. They also constitute key prerequisites for admission into tertiary institutions for further studies. However, in the North-Eastern zone in Nigeria, many students continue to struggle with achieving excellence in these core subjects. Reports from the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) over the past seven years indicated persistently poor outcomes in English Language and Mathematics (Genyi, 2023), observed that the prevalence of low academic achievement has worsened in the past two decades, despite substantial government investments aimed at improving the quality of students' learning outcomes in schools.

The pattern of students' academic achievement in public senior secondary schools, Mathematics and English Language across the North-Eastern States in Nigeria have demonstrated a consistent decline over the past few years. According to the WAEC report in the year 2024, the trend from 2021 to 2024 highlighted this downward trajectory. In Adamawa State, Nigeria, only 35.3% of students obtained passes in both Mathematics and English Language in 2021, which dropped to 30.48% in 2022. In the year 2023, just 26.61% achieved passes in both subjects, and the figure further declined to 18.71% in the year 2024. In Borno State, Nigeria, the situation appears even more alarming as in 2021, 19.03% of students secured credit passes in both Mathematics and English Language, but this fell to 18.01% in the year 2022. The rate further decreased to 17.09% in the 2023 and plummeted to 16.3% in the year 2024. Despite various government interventions aimed at improving students' outcomes in Mathematics and English Language, achievement levels have persistently remained poor. This troubling trend poses a serious threat to the educational prospects of students in the North-Eastern States in Nigeria. The continued low achievement in these core subjects English Language and Mathematics may be largely attributed to the disruptive effects of insecurity, particularly the Boko Haram insurgency and widespread banditry (Oluremi & Aziza, 2020).

WAEC 2025 report indicated a revised pass rate of 62.96% for candidates who passed both English Language and Mathematics, following an error in the initial results. The national report showed that 1, 239, 884 candidates, representing 62.96% of those who sat for the exam, achieved credit passes in a minimum of five subjects including English Language and Mathematics. The first release of the WAEC 2025 results had a pass rate of 38.32% for both subjects combined, which was later corrected. The initial error was due to a technical fault where a wrong serialized code file was used to grade the English Language objective paper, leading to candidates being scored with incorrect answer keys. As at the time of this study, WAEC 2025 was yet to release

the percentage scored in English Language and Mathematics in the North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria.

According to Abubakar (2021), one of the factors that may be affecting academic achievement in North-Eastern Nigeria is insurgency, which refers to organized, often violent uprisings against established authorities or institutions. Insurgency disrupts normal social and educational structures, creating an atmosphere of fear, tension and instability that negatively impacts students' learning experiences. Schools in insurgency-affected areas often face closures, damages to infrastructure, and reduced instructional time and materials of which hinder the academic progress of public senior secondary students. According to Abubakar (2021), the persistent threat of violent conflict increases absenteeism, decreases student concentration, and lowers participation in classroom activities. Students frequently experience stress, trauma, and anxiety, which diminish their cognitive engagement and capacity to assimilate complex subjects such as Mathematics and English Language. Teachers are not left out in this fate as they may feel unsafe delivering lessons or may be redeployed to safer areas, further disrupting the learning process. Oyetunde (2022), opined that this prolonged exposure to insurgency limits students' access to consistent teaching and learning opportunities, contributing to repeated poor achievement in national examinations. In this regard, insurgency not only threatens the safety of schools but also undermines the overall quality of education, highlighting the urgent need for security interventions to protect learning environments in the North-East Geo-political zone in Nigeria.

Boko Haram, the militant Islamist group in North-Eastern Nigeria, has had a devastating effect on their education sector. Its activities, including attacks on schools, abductions of students, teachers and targeted killings, have disrupted learning activities and created a climate of fear among students, teachers, and communities. According to Ibrahim (2020), schools in Boko Haram-affected areas frequently close down or operate under strict security restrictions, reducing instructional time and limiting access to educational resources. Students exposed to these threats often experience psychological trauma, decreased motivation, and declining academic engagement, which may directly affect achievement in critical subjects such as Mathematics and English Language. Teachers may be absent or unwilling to work in high-risk areas, further compounding the disruption. The incessant threat of violence leads to population displacement, forcing students to relocate and interrupting their schooling. The cumulative impact of Boko Haram's activities may be evident in repeated poor outcomes in national examinations, as students struggle to achieve expected learning milestones. Onwuegbuzie (2023), asserted that addressing the Boko Haram threat through effective security measures, community engagement, and psychosocial support is crucial to restoring safe learning environments and improving students' academic outcomes in the region.

Banditry may also be another major factor affecting academic achievement in North-Eastern Nigeria. Bandits engage in armed robbery, kidnapping, and attacks on communities, including school premises, creating unsafe conditions for learners and educators. According to Young (2021), banditry contributes to school closures, forced migrations, and chronic absenteeism, which collectively disrupt the learning process. Students living in bandit-affected areas often face heightened anxiety and insecurity, which reduces concentration, lowers participation in classroom activities, and diminishes academic achievement, particularly in challenging subjects like Mathematics and English Language. Teachers also are faced with threats to personal safety, limiting their ability to deliver lessons effectively. Additionally, families may withdraw children from school for fear of attacks, further reducing enrollment and engagement. The persistent threat of banditry undermines the stability and consistency required for meaningful learning, perpetuating cycles of poor academic outcomes. Ensuring security, providing emergency support, and establishing community-policing initiatives are critical to mitigating the negative effects of banditry and sustaining educational progress in affected areas.

Insurgency-Boko Haram activities, and banditry may be the major factors contributing to low academic achievement among public senior secondary schools' students in North-East Geo-

political zone in Nigeria. These threats disrupt normal school functioning, reduce instructional time, and create environments of fear and psychological distress, all of which may negatively impact students' focus, motivation, and learning outcomes. It is against this background that the researcher decided to investigate the relationship between insurgency, and academic achievement of public senior secondary schools in North East Geo-political Zone, Nigeria.

Objectives

The general purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between insurgency, and academic achievement of public senior secondary schools in North East Geo-political Zone in Nigeria.

Specifically, to,

1. determine the relationship between boko haram and academic achievement of public senior secondary school students in North East Geo-political Zone, Nigeria.
2. investigate the relationship between banditry and academic achievement of public senior secondary school students in North East Geo-political Zone, Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered:

1. What is the relationship between boko haram and academic achievement of public senior secondary school students in North East Geo-political Zone, Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between banditry and academic achievement of public senior secondary schools in North East Geo-political Zone, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were postulated for this study.

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between Boko Haram and academic achievement of public senior secondary schools in North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria.

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between banditry and academic achievement of public senior secondary schools in North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria.

METHOD

A correlation research design was adopted for this study to examine the relationships between the variables under investigation. Correlation research design is particularly useful for determining whether and how strongly variables are related, as it allows researchers to identify both the direction and the magnitude of associations between two or more variables. This approach provides a systematic way of understanding the interconnections among study variables. The population of the study comprised 173,567 of SSII students from six (6) states of North Eastern States of Nigeria, including Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Borno, Taraba and Yobe which has a total of 3,199 public senior secondary schools in the six states, (State Ministries of Education, 2025). The sample size of this study was 540 respondents (SS2) students from the eighteen (18) public secondary schools in North Eastern States of Nigeria which was determined using research advisors (2006) at 95% confidence interval (2.5% margin of error). The sample size was drawn using Multistage sampling procedure. Multistage sampling was considered appropriate for this study due to the large and widely distributed population across the 3,199 public secondary schools in North Eastern Nigeria. This technique involved first selecting schools and subsequently sampling students, which ensured a representative sample while reducing both cost and time. It improved precision, minimized sampling bias, and rendered the final sample of 540 SS2 students from eighteen (18) schools manageable, dependable, and suitable for valid generalization. Permission was sought from various heads of the schools selected and consent was granted both by the school and students themselves when they were told that their responses would be for research purposes only, and were assured of the confidentiality of their responses.

Three instruments were used for this study, namely: Questionnaire on Insurgency (QOI), Mathematics Achievement Test (MAT), and English Language Achievement Test (ELAT). The Questionnaire on Insurgency comprised 20 items and was developed to assess perceptions and experiences of insurgency among public senior secondary school students in North Eastern Geo-political Zones in Nigeria. The items were organized as follows: 10 items on personal exposure to Boko Haram and 10 items on banditry. Responses were measured using a 4-point rating scale: SA = Strongly Agree (4), A = Agree (3), SD = Strongly Disagree (2), D = Disagree (1). The Mathematics Achievement Test for SSS2 students comprised 40 items and was used to determine the level of academic achievement in Mathematics. Similarly, the English Language Achievement Test comprised 40 items and was used to measure academic achievement in English Language.

The instruments were validated by two experts in the Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education, Bingham University, Karu for face, construct and content validity. It yielded a validity index of 0.86 for Questionnaire on Insurgency (QOI), 0.83 for Mathematics Achievement Test (MAT) and 0.82 for English Language Achievement Test (ELAT) respectively.

The instruments were trial tested on 50 SSS 2 students which was part of the sample size but not part of the population. The data collated were analyzed and subjected to the Cronbach Alpha and Kurda Richardson methods of determining the coefficient of internal consistency. The analysis of the responses yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.77 for Questionnaire on Insurgency (QOI), 0.74 for Mathematics Achievement Test (MAT) and 0.78 for English Language Achievement Test (ELAT). Pearson product moment correlation was used to answer and analyzed research questions on the basis of the values of r (coefficient of correlation). Any correlation coefficient valued below 0.50 was considered low while those above it was considered high. The hypotheses, were, however, tested at 0.05 level of significance by comparing the p -value (probability values) of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation obtained from SPSS application with the significance level at 0.05. For hypotheses whose p -values were less than 0.05, were rejected while for those greater than 0.05 were not rejected

RESULTS

Research Questions 1: What is the relationship between Boko Haram and academic achievement of public senior secondary schools in North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria?

Table 1: Correlation between Boko Haram and academic achievement of public senior secondary schools in North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria

Variables	N	X	Std.D	R	Remark
Boko Haram	540	3.10	1.85	-0.685	Negative correlation
Academic Achievement	540	52.47	4.15		

Table 1 showed the correlation between Boko Haram and academic achievement among public senior secondary school students in the North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria. The result revealed responses from 540 respondents. The mean scores for Boko Haram and academic achievement were 3.10 and 52.47, with a corresponding standard deviation of 1.85 and 4.15, respectively. The correlation coefficient (r) is -0.685, which indicates a negative correlation. This implies that there is a negative relationship between Boko Haram and academic achievement among public senior secondary school students in the North East Zone, Nigeria.

Research Questions 2: What is the relationship between banditry and academic achievement of public senior secondary schools in North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria?

Table 2: Correlation between banditry and academic achievement of public senior secondary schools in North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria

Variables	N	X	Std.D	r	Remark
Banditry	540	3.45	1.90	-0.712	Negative correlation
Academic Achievement	540	52.47	4.15		

Table 2 showed the correlation between banditry and academic achievement among public senior secondary school students in the North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria. The result revealed responses from 540 respondents. The mean scores for banditry and academic achievement were 3.45 and 52.47, with a corresponding standard deviation of 1.90 and 4.15, respectively. The correlation coefficient (r) is -0.712, which is less than the benchmark value of 0.50. This implies that there is a negative relationship between banditry and academic achievement among public senior secondary school students in the North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria.

Testing Research Hypotheses

Hypotheses 1: There is no significant relationship between Boko Haram and academic achievement of public senior secondary schools in the North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria.

Table 3: Correlation between Boko Haram and academic achievement of public senior secondary schools in East Central Zone, Nigeria

Variables	N	X	Std.D	Df	R	r2	p-value	Decision
Boko Haram	540	3.10	1.85	538	-0.685	0.469	0.001	Rejected
Academic Achievement	540	52.47	4.15					

Level of significance Alpha (α) < 0.05 shows significant relationship

Table 3 showed the relationship between Boko Haram and academic achievement among public senior secondary school students in North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria. The result revealed a correlation coefficient of $r=-0.685$, $r^2=0.469$, and a p-value of 0.001, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the hypotheses is rejected. This implies that there is a significant negative relationship between Boko Haram and academic achievement among public senior secondary school students in North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between banditry and academic achievement of public senior secondary schools in North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria.

Table 4: Correlation between banditry and academic achievement of public senior secondary schools in North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria

Variables	N	X	Std.D	Df	r	r2	p-value	Decision
Banditry	540	3.45	1.90	538	-0.712	0.507	0.003	Rejected
Academic Achievement	540	52.47	4.15					

Level of significance Alpha (α) < 0.05 shows significant relationship

Table 4 showed the relationship between banditry and academic achievement among public senior secondary school students in North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria. The result revealed a correlation coefficient of $r=-0.712$, $r^2=0.507$, and a p-value of 0.003, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the hypotheses is rejected. This implies that there is a significant negative relationship between banditry and academic achievement among public senior secondary school students in North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION

The findings from hypotheses one revealed a significant negative relationship between Boko Haram and academic achievement of public senior secondary schools in North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria. The findings of this study is in line with Abakpa (2024), whose study revealed that the Boko Haram insurgency significantly disrupted academic activities, leading to irregular attendance and poor academic performance among students. Factors such as insecurity, psychological trauma, displacement, and lack of teaching resources were identified as contributing to these outcomes. The study was also supported by John, Wadi, Tanko, and Ishaya (2024), who found that the Boko Haram insurgency significantly disrupted academic activities, leading to reduced student performance. Factors such as fear, displacement, and inadequate learning environments were identified as major contributors to the decline. Furthermore, students and teachers in the affected areas faced psychological trauma, limited resources, and irregular school attendance, which compounded the academic challenges. It was also substantiated by Alexander, Musa, Bala, and Thomas (2024), whose study revealed that the insurgency had a significant negative impact on students' attitudes and academic performance in Mathematics and English Language.

The result from hypotheses two revealed a significant negative relationship between banditry and academic achievement of public senior secondary schools in North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria. The findings of this study is in line with Ojukwu (2017), who found that kidnapping significantly affects the academic performance of secondary school students while students' gangsterism, smoking of Indian hemp, abusing other hard drugs, cult and related violent activities were some of the factors that constituted insecurity of the school environment which eventually cause boys to leave school and join trading while leading girls to drop out of school to settle for marriage or prostitution on the streets causing economic havoc to the nation of Nigeria. The study was also supported by Naziru, Fada, Lummo, and Evans (2023), whose study revealed that banditry attacks have significantly disrupted the education sector in North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria, leading to a decline in school attendance, staff morale, and overall educational outcomes. Many schools experienced infrastructure damages and the displacement of staff and students. The fear of further attacks exacerbated these challenges, hindering efforts to rebuild the affected schools. Boko Haram Insurgency and Banditry continue to ravage the education sector in the North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study concluded that insecurity, in the forms of Boko Haram insurgency and banditry, negatively affect the academic achievement of public senior secondary school students in the North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria. Exposure to these threats undermines students' focus, engagement, and overall learning outcomes, disrupting both academic progress and personal development. The findings underscore the need for effective security measures to safeguard educational environments and ensure that students can learn and thrive without fear or interruption. If such are put in place, it will be, however, healthy for the environment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government and Stakeholders should implement security measures and collaborate with local and national authorities to combat the influence of Boko Haram and Banditry in the North East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria where teaching and learning can be environmentally conducive.
2. The Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria should recruit more military personnel and deploy them to the North East Geo-Political Zone to enforce peace especially in schools where learning can take place effectively without the fear of unknown or prejudice.

3. Each state in the North East, Nigeria, and the concerned stakeholders should invest in community policing, strengthening school security systems, and create awareness programs to reduce grave activities of the insurgency on public senior secondary schools, thereby improving students' academic achievements.

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