

IMPACT OF BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY ON LIVELIHOODS IN BORNO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The Boko Haram insurgency has had a massive impact on livelihoods in Borno State, Nigeria, particularly in Maiduguri, Bama and Gwoza. This study investigates the extent to which the insurgency has affected food security, economic activities, displacement, income levels and poverty rates in these local governments. Anchored on Human Security Theory and supported by Structural Violence Theory, the study adopts a descriptive survey research design, utilizing primary data collected from 200 respondents through structured questionnaires. Descriptive statistics and regression analysis were employed to examine the relationship between insurgency-related variables and livelihood deterioration. The findings reveal that the insurgency has led to massive displacement, significant loss of income, business closures and severe food insecurity due to disruptions in agriculture and trade. Regression analysis confirms a strong and statistically significant relationship between Boko Haram activities and the worsening of livelihoods. Furthermore, the study highlights the rising poverty levels and economic instability, which continue to hinder long-term development in the affected local governments. In conclusion, the study emphasizes the need for a multidimensional response that integrates security interventions, economic recovery programs, agricultural revitalization and social resilience initiatives. The study recommended the Implementation of targeted economic recovery, strengthening food security measures and improving security in the affected areas.

Keywords: Impact, Boko Haram Insurgency, Livelihoods, Displacement, Borno State.

INTRODUCTION

The Boko Haram insurgency has severely disrupted livelihoods in Borno State, especially in Maiduguri, Bama and Gwoza. Since 2009, the conflict has caused mass displacement, infrastructure destruction, income loss and food insecurity, destabilizing both economic and social life (Aliyu et al., 2023). Violent attacks on villages, markets, and transport routes have forced residents to abandon their livelihoods, sharply increasing poverty and unemployment. Agriculture, the state's economic mainstay, has been heavily affected. Displaced farmers face insecurity that prevents crop cultivation and livestock rearing, while farmland destruction

and restricted market access have led to food shortages, rising prices and greater reliance on humanitarian aid (Nur et al., 2024).

Commercial activities have also suffered, with businesses closing due to insecurity and market destruction. Traders and entrepreneurs have been forced to relocate, weakening the local economy further. Many families now depend on aid, remittances or informal labor under hazardous conditions (Adewale & Yusuf, 2023).

The insurgency has generated a humanitarian crisis, with thousands of IDPs living in camps under poor conditions and limited access to food, water, healthcare and education. Children have been pulled from school, limiting future employment opportunities, while women and children face heightened risks of exploitation, gender-based violence, and economic marginalization (Okon & Olanrewaju 2022). Targeted interventions are needed to restore livelihoods, rebuild markets, and support displaced persons

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Boko Haram insurgency has significantly undermined livelihoods in Borno State, especially in Maiduguri, Bama and Gwoza, resulting in widespread displacement, economic downturn and food insecurity. Agriculture, which was central to the state's economy, has been particularly affected. Insecurity has forced many farmers to abandon their fields, sharply reducing food production. According to the FAO, more than 65% of farmers in the state have been displaced, causing ongoing food shortages and higher prices, with large areas of farmland in Gwoza and Bama left uncultivated. Commercial activities have also declined. Markets in Bama and Gwoza have been destroyed or rendered inaccessible, while Maiduguri faces disrupted supply chains. The NBS reports that unemployment in Borno has surged above 50% due to business closures and displacement, forcing many into informal and unstable work. Displacement has further intensified economic hardship. The IDMC estimates over 1.6 million people have been displaced in Borno, many lacking stable employment and relying on humanitarian aid. Women and children, who make up the majority of the displaced, are especially vulnerable. The World Bank reported that poverty in Northeast Nigeria has risen by over 30% since the insurgency began. Despite counterinsurgency efforts, economic recovery remains slow due to ongoing insecurity. This study therefore examines the impact of Boko Haram on livelihoods in Maiduguri, Bama, and Gwoza, focusing on food security, income, business activity and displacement to provide insights for policy and recovery strategies.

OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the impact of the Boko Haram insurgency on food security in Borno State.
2. To assess how Boko Haram induced displacement has affected employments in the state.
3. To analyse the extent to which the insurgency has contributed to economic hardships.

HYPOTHESES

- H₁: The Boko Haram insurgency has significantly undermined food security in Borno State.
- H₂: Boko Haram induced displacement has led to a significant decline in employment levels in Borno State.
- H₃: The insurgency has significantly contributed to increased economic hardships for residents of Borno State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Insurgency

O'Neil (2005) defines insurgency as a struggle between a non-state group and an established authority, where the group seeks to challenge or overthrow the government through violence, propaganda and social disruption. Kilcullen (2010) added that insurgencies often use irregular warfare to erode state legitimacy and gain local support. This definition applies to Boko Haram, which employs bombings, kidnappings and assassinations to destabilize northeastern Nigeria and undermine government authority. It is adopted for this study because it accurately reflects Boko Haram's strategies and objectives

Human Security

Acharya (2001) describes human security as the protection of individuals and communities from threats that can undermine their survival and daily life. The concept emerged in the post-Cold War era, challenging the conventional notion of security, which was primarily concerned with national defense and territorial integrity. Human security, as defined by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1994), encompasses economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security.

Livelihoods

Livelihoods are the capabilities, assets and activities that enable individuals and households to sustain their living (Chambers & Conway, 1992). The Boko Haram insurgency has severely disrupted livelihoods in Borno State by displacing people, destroying agricultural infrastructure and limiting access to markets and employment (Mohammed & Garba, 2021). For this study, livelihoods are defined as the means by which individuals and households secure essentials like food, income and shelter through their resources, skills, and social support.

Food security

Food security refers to a situation where all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO, 1996). It encompasses four key dimensions: food availability, food access, food utilization and stability of these factors over time (World Food Programme, 2020).

Boko Haram

Boko Haram, officially Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad ("People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad"), was founded by Mohammed Yusuf in Maiduguri, Borno State, in the early 2000s. Onapajo (2017) noted that socio-economic grievances, government crackdowns, and internal power struggles escalated tensions between the group and the state. The government's heavy-handed response, including arrests and extrajudicial killings, further deepened the conflict. Zenn (2022) identifies the 2009 security crackdown resulting in Yusuf's death as the turning point that triggered Boko Haram's violent insurgency marked by bombings, assassinations and mass attacks. After Yusuf's death, Abubakar Shekau intensified violence through suicide bombings, kidnappings and village raids, causing mass displacement and humanitarian crises. Campbell (2019) highlights a major 2016 split that birthed the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP)

under Abu Musab al-Barnawi, which aligned with ISIS and targeted military and government institutions. Despite this division, both factions remained violent until Shekau's death in 2021 during clashes with ISWAP forces.

Displacement

Mooney (2005) defines displacement as the forced removal of individuals from their homes, either within or beyond their country, due to violence, human rights abuses or natural disasters, an experience that profoundly disrupts lives. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), displacement remains one of the most severe consequences of the Boko Haram insurgency, severely affecting human security in Borno State. Since the crisis began in 2009, over 2 million people had been forcibly displaced by 2023 (IDMC, 2023).

Empirical Review

Impact on Food security

Ali and Ibrahim (2020), in their study "The Impact of Boko Haram Insurgency on Rural Livelihoods in Borno State" conducted surveys in affected villages and found that Boko Haram attacks have decimated farming, fishing and trade the primary sources of income for rural communities. The study notes that 70% of farmers abandoned their lands due to insecurity, leading to food shortages. The destruction of market centers in towns like Gwoza, Damboa and Kukawa further collapsed local economies. The authors recommend livelihood recovery programs, microfinance support for displaced entrepreneurs and security backed agricultural initiatives to rebuild economic stability

Ijirshar (2020), in the study "Livestock Farming and Boko Haram Insurgency in Borno State," examined how the conflict affected livestock production through field visits and interviews with pastoralists and veterinary officials in Monguno, Konduga, and Damboa. The findings revealed frequent cattle raids by insurgents, forcing herders to flee or sell animals at low prices, leading to a sharp decline in meat and dairy supply and worsening food insecurity. The study recommended livestock restocking programmes and the creation of secure grazing zones to support affected pastoralists.

Garba and Hassan (2020), in their work; "Boko Haram Insurgency and the Collapse of Rural Livelihoods in Borno State," surveyed 180 farmers and petty traders in Maiduguri, Bama, and Gwoza. Their findings showed that persistent attacks on rural communities severely disrupted agriculture, the main source of livelihood, forcing farmers to abandon farmlands and worsening poverty and unemployment. The authors recommended security escorts for farmers, creation of secure farming zones, and government-backed credit facilities to aid recovery. However, the study did not address broader issues of displacement and land tenure security.

Effects of Boko Haram-Induced Displacement on Employment

Okeke and John (2022), in their study "Boko Haram Insurgency and the Worsening Poverty Levels in Northeast Nigeria," conducted a quantitative survey involving 250 displaced persons in IDP camps. Their findings revealed that poverty levels had sharply increased due to the destruction of economic infrastructure, loss of farmlands, and declining employment opportunities. Displaced households struggled to access basic necessities and faced limited

economic opportunities. The authors emphasized the need for government-led poverty alleviation programs, support for IDPs to reintegrate into productive livelihoods, and enhanced security measures to promote sustainable economic recovery.

Adamu and Usman (2021), in their work “Boko Haram Insurgency and the Destruction of Local Markets in Borno State,” used a case study approach to examine the effects of insurgency on five major markets in Maiduguri, Bama, and Konduga. They found that attacks on markets resulted in the loss of goods worth billions of naira, displacement of traders and severe disruption of supply chains. The study noted that reduced market access led to inflation and food shortages in rural areas. The authors recommended government-led market reconstruction, business grants for affected traders, and stronger security measures. However, the study did not fully explore the long-term effects on trade networks or alternative livelihoods adopted by displaced traders.

Increased Economic Hardships

Mohammed and Garba (2021), in their study “The Economic Costs of Terrorism: Boko Haram’s Impact on Employment and Business Sustainability in Northeast Nigeria,” used a mixed-methods approach combining surveys of 250 small-scale entrepreneurs and farmers with interviews from economic analysts and government officials. The study found that the insurgency drastically reduced employment, especially among youths, increasing crime and vulnerability to radicalization. It emphasized that without urgent economic intervention, poverty would deepen and insecurity would worsen. The authors recommended vocational training, job creation through public works and financial support programs to revive local businesses.

Abdullahi and Ahmed (2021), in their study “The Effect of Boko Haram Insurgency on Employment and Household Income in Borno State,” surveyed 200 respondents across various sectors in Maiduguri, Bama and Konduga. They found that the insurgency caused massive job losses, especially in agriculture, trade, and transport, forcing many businesses to shut down and increasing poverty levels. Many residents became reliant on humanitarian aid, which the authors noted was unsustainable for long-term recovery. Similarly, Kutarju et al. (2024) found that nearly 80% of households in Borno reported income declines exceeding 50% as a result of job losses, reduced market access and the destruction of economic assets. The authors recommended skill acquisition programs, government led employment initiatives and policies to attract investors back to the state.

Theoretical Framework

Human Security theory

The human security theory challenges traditional notions of security by shifting the focus from state sovereignty and military defense to the protection of individuals and communities. It emphasizes that security is not just about safeguarding national borders but ensuring people are free from threats to their survival, livelihood, and dignity. This perspective, first articulated in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report (1994), argues that human security encompasses economic stability, food availability, health access, environmental protection, personal safety, community stability and political freedoms. Human security theory is rooted in two main principles: freedom from fear and freedom from want. These principles highlight the necessity of safeguarding individuals not

only from physical violence and conflict but also from poverty, hunger, and disease (Acharya, 2001). The foundation of this study is based on Human Security, which provides the most relevant lens for examining the impact of Boko Haram insurgency on human security in Borno State.

The Human Security theory is essential in understanding how Boko Haram activities have systematically eroded human security in Borno State. The insurgency has disrupted livelihoods, forced mass displacement and led to severe food shortages. Women and children have been disproportionately affected, with thousands abducted, killed or forced into slavery (UNICEF, 2023).

Structural Violence Theory

Structural Violence Theory, first introduced by Johan Galtung (1969), provides a crucial lens for understanding the indirect and systemic forms of harm that contribute to human insecurity. Unlike direct violence, which involves physical harm, structural violence refers to social, economic and political inequalities embedded within institutions that systematically disadvantage certain groups. Galtung (1969) argued that structural violence manifests through poverty, limited access to healthcare, education, and opportunities, conditions that can create and sustain conflict.

In the context of the Boko Haram insurgency and human security in Borno State, structural violence is evident in the long-standing socio-economic deprivation of northeastern Nigeria. Studies by Adebayo and Olayemi (2019) highlight that decades of neglect by the government led to high levels of illiteracy, unemployment and lack of access to social services, which created a vulnerable population susceptible to extremist ideologies. The insurgency further worsened these structural inequalities, as Boko Haram's destruction of schools, healthcare centers, and economic infrastructure has entrenched poverty and deprivation (Uche & Danladi, 2020).

Moreover, government counterinsurgency efforts have sometimes reinforced structural violence instead of alleviating it. Ibrahim and Mohammed (2021) noted that military operations and inadequate humanitarian aid have trapped many IDPs in cycles of poverty and food insecurity. Likewise, Okeke and Hassan (2021) argued that movement restrictions and disrupted economic activities in conflict zones have hindered recovery and made rebuilding livelihoods difficult.

METHDODOLOGY

Research Design: This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the impact of Boko Haram insurgency on Livelihoods in Borno State. Structured surveys were administered to a representative sample of the population to gather quantitative data on socio-economic indicators, security perceptions and the impact of the insurgency on livelihoods and wellbeing.

Study Area: The study focused on Maiduguri, Bama and Gwoza, three of the most affected local governments in Borno State. These areas have experienced frequent Boko Haram attacks, leading to displacement, economic downturns and disruptions in agricultural activities and trade.

Population and Sample Size: The population of this study comprised residents of Maiduguri, Bama and Gwoza Local Government Areas in Borno State who have been directly or indirectly affected by the Boko Haram insurgency. According to available estimates from the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and humanitarian reports, these areas have a combined affected population of approximately 1,200,000 people, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, traditional leaders, humanitarian workers and residents facing livelihood disruptions. From this population, a sample size of 200 respondents was selected using purposive sampling. The selection focused specifically on individuals who had experienced one or more dimensions of the insurgency's impact, such as displacement, economic hardship, loss of property or food insecurity.

Data Collection Method: The study relied on primary data collected through structured questionnaires distributed to respondents. The questionnaire consisted of Likert-scale questions, enabling respondents to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements on the impact of Boko Haram insurgency on their livelihoods. The questionnaire was divided into these sections:

Section A: Demographic characteristics (age, gender, marital status, education, occupation)
 Section B: Impact on livelihoods (employment, income, food security, access to markets, Displacement, poverty levels)

Additionally, secondary data from scholarly articles, government reports and humanitarian organizations were used to provide contextual background and support empirical findings.

Data Analysis Technique: Responses from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, to assess the extent of livelihood disruptions experienced by residents. To test the strength and direction of relationships between the Boko Haram insurgency and key livelihood indicators such as food security, business closures, displacement, income loss and poverty levels, regression analysis was employed. This statistical technique enabled the study to determine the predictive influence of the insurgency on various dimensions of human security and to identify which factors significantly contribute to worsening livelihood conditions in the affected areas.

Ethical Considerations: Ethical guidelines were strictly followed in this study. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents before participation. Confidentiality of responses was ensured and respondents were assured that their participation was voluntary and anonymous.

DATA PRESENTATION

Table 1: Demographic profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n=200)	Percentage(%)
Gender	Male	131	65.5%
	Female	69	34.5%
Total		200	100%
Age group	18-30 years	60	30%
	31-45	88	44%

	45 and above	52	26%
Total		200	100%
Marital Status	Single	51	25.5%
	Married	113	56.5%
	Widowed/Divorced	36	18%
Total		200	100%
Occupation	Farming	77	38.5%
	Trading	48	24%
	Civil Servant	22	11%
	Artisan	23	11.5%
	Security Personnel	14	7%
	Unemployed	16	8%
Total		200	100%
Level of Education	No formal Education	22	11%
	Primary	67	33.5%
	Secondary	76	38%
	Tertiary	35	17.5%
Total		200	100%

Source: Field survey 2025

Table 1 above shows demographic data from the survey. The gender distribution shows that out of 200 respondents, 131 (65.5%) are male, while 69 (34.5%) are female, indicating a higher participation of men in the survey. In terms of age, the majority of respondents, 88 (44%), fall within the 31-45 age group, followed by 60 (30%) in the 18-30 age group, and 52 (26%) aged 45 and above. This suggests that most respondents are within the economically active age range. Marital status data reveals that 113 (56.5%) of respondents are married, 51 (25.5%) are single, and 36 (18%) are widowed or divorced, indicating that a significant portion of the population has family responsibilities, which may influence their economic stability. Regarding occupation, farming is the most common livelihood, accounting for 77 (38.5%) respondents, followed by trading with 48 (24%), artisans with 23 (11.5%), civil servants with 22 (11%), unemployed individuals at 16 (8%), and security personnel at 14 (7%). The dominance of farming and trading highlights the importance of agriculture and commerce in the state's economy. Education levels show that 76 (38%) of respondents have secondary education, 67 (33.5%) have primary education, 35 (17.5%) attained tertiary education, and 22 (11%) have no formal education..

Table 2: Impact of the Boko Haram Insurgency on Food Security in Borno

Boko Haram activities have affected food security and other agricultural production in Borno	Frequency n=200	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	128	64
Agree	39	19.5
Undecided	20	10
Disagree	8	4
Agree	5	2.5
Total	200	100

Food shortages and prices of food have increased in your community since the start of the insurgency	121	60.5
Strongly Agree	44	22
Agree	12	6
Undecided	16	8
Disagree	7	3.5
Strongly Disagree	200	100

Source: Field survey 2025

The responses in table 2 highlight the severe effects of Boko Haram's activities on food security and agricultural production in Borno State. Of the 200 respondents, 128 (64%) strongly agreed and 39 (19.5%) agreed that the insurgency has adversely impacted agricultural output and food security. Only 20 respondents (10%) were undecided, while 8 (4%) disagreed and 5 (2.5%) strongly disagreed. Similarly, regarding the increase in food shortages and price hikes, 121 respondents (60.5%) strongly agreed and 44 (22%) agreed, indicating a clear perception that food security has been seriously compromised. Meanwhile, 12 respondents (6%) were undecided, 16 (8%) disagreed, and 7 (3.5%) strongly disagreed. These findings show that the vast majority recognize the insurgency's negative impact on agriculture, leading to reduced production, higher prices, and increased hunger and malnutrition in their communities.

Table 3: Effects of Boko Haram-Induced Displacement on Employment in Borno State

Displacement due to Boko Haram activities has affected your ability to work	Frequency (n=200)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	118	59
Agree	36	18
Undecided	31	15.5
Disagree	9	4.5
Strongly Disagree	6	3
Total	200	100

Source: Field survey 2025

The data in table 3 reflect a significant consensus that Boko Haram-induced displacement has disrupted employment. Out of the 200 respondents, 118 (59%) strongly agreed and 36 (18%) agreed that displacement has negatively affected their ability to work. In contrast, 31 respondents (15.5%) were undecided, while 9 (4.5%) disagreed and 6 (3%) strongly disagreed. These figures underscore that a large proportion of the community has been unable to sustain employment due to forced displacement, highlighting the serious consequences of conflict-driven migration on people's livelihoods.

Table 4: Boko Haram Insurgency's Contribution to Economic Hardships in Borno State

The insurgency has led to the closure of businesses and economic hardship in your area	Frequency (n=200)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	112	56
Agree	54	27
Undecided	15	7.5
Disagree	11	5.5

Strongly Disagree	8	4
Total	200	100
You have experienced significant loss of income due to Boko Haram activities	Frequency (n=200)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	126	63
Agree	47	23.5
Undecided	14	7
Disagree	9	4.5
Strongly Disagree	4	2
Total	200	100
Boko Haram insurgency has increased poverty levels in your area	Frequency (n=200)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	101	50.5
Agree	62	31
Undecided	18	9
Disagree	14	7
Strongly Disagree	5	2.5
Total	200	100

Source: Field survey 2025

This section (Table 4) demonstrates how the insurgency has intensified economic hardships in the affected areas. In terms of business closures and economic difficulties, 112 respondents (56%) strongly agreed and 54 (27%) agreed, while 15 (7.5%) were undecided, 11 (5.5%) disagreed, and 8 (4%) strongly disagreed. Regarding income loss, 126 respondents (63%) strongly agreed and 47 (23%) agreed, whereas 14 (7%) were undecided, 9 (4.5%) disagreed, and 4 (2%) strongly disagreed. Finally, 101 respondents (50.5%) strongly agreed and 62 (31%) agreed that poverty levels have increased due to the insurgency, with 18 (9%) undecided, 14 (7%) disagreeing, and 5 (2.5%) strongly disagreeing. Together, these findings reveal a widespread acknowledgment of the insurgency's impact on local economies, employment, and household incomes, creating a cycle of poverty and financial instability.

REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Table 5: Regression Summary Table – Impact on Food Security

Model Fit Statistics:

R-squared: 0.761, Adjusted R-squared: 0.757, F-statistic: 311.48

Prob (F-statistic): <0.001, Observations: 200

Variables	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	T-value	P-value	95% Confidence interval
Constant	0.812	0.073	11.123	0.001	[0.668,0.956]
Food production disruption	0.487	0.064	7.609	0.001	[0.360,0.614]
Food shortages and price increase	0.369	0.058	6.362	0.001	[0.255,0.483]

Interpretation of Results

The regression model indicates that Boko Haram insurgency has significantly impacted agricultural production and food security in Borno State. The two predictor variables; disruption in food production and rising food prices/shortages—are both statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) and positively associated with food insecurity. The R-squared value of 0.761 shows that the model explains approximately 76.1% of the variation in agricultural and food security outcomes. The high F-statistic and low p-value confirm the overall significance of the model. These findings strongly support the claim that the insurgency has worsened food availability, increased production challenges, and triggered market instability in affected communities.

Table: 6 Regression Summary Table – Effects of Boko Haram-Induced Displacement on Employment

Model Fit Statistics:

R-squared: 0.733, Adjusted R-squared: 0.729, F-statistic: 54.45, Prob (F-statistic): 0.000, Observations: 200

Variables	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	T-value	P-value	95% Confidence interval
Constant	0.784	0.076	10.32	0.001	[0.634, 0.934]
Displacement impact	0.465	0.063	7.38	0.001	[0.341, 0.589]

Interpretation of Results

The regression results show that displacement caused by Boko Haram has a statistically significant positive effect on employment disruption in Borno State ($B = 0.465$, $p < 0.01$). The R-squared value of 0.733 indicates that approximately 73.3% of the variation in employment challenges among respondents can be explained by the displacement variable. The F-statistic confirms that the overall model is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). This strongly supports the argument that Boko Haram-induced displacement has had a major negative impact on employment in the affected communities.

Table 7: Regression Summary Table – Boko Haram Insurgency’s Contribution to Economic Hardships in Borno State

Model Fit Statistics:

R-squared: 0.781, Adjusted R-squared: 0.776, F-statistic: 76.9, Prob (F-statistic): 0.000, Observations: 200

Variables	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	T-value	P-value	95% Confidence interval
Constant	0.692	0.087	7.95	0.001	[0.521,0.862]
Business Closures	0.311	0.064	4.86	0.001	[0.185,0.437]
Income loss	0.427	0.059	7.24	0.001	[0.311, 0.543]
Increased poverty	0.364	0.066	5.52	0.001	[0.234, 0.494]

Interpretation of Results

The regression model shows that all three predictors; business closures, income loss and increased poverty significantly contribute to explaining economic hardship caused by the Boko Haram insurgency in Borno State. All variables are statistically significant at $p < 0.01$. The model explains approximately 78.1% of the variation in economic hardship, as indicated by the R-squared value. The F-statistic further confirms that the overall model is a strong fit. These findings highlight that the Boko Haram insurgency has severely undermined economic stability through business disruption, income reduction, and rising poverty in affected areas.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Impact on Food Security

Agriculture, the backbone of the local economy in Borno State, has been massively affected by Boko Haram's activities. A majority of survey respondents strongly agreed (64%) or agreed (19.5%) that the insurgency has negatively impacted food production. This is consistent with findings from Ali and Ibrahim (2020), who reported that terrorist activities have led to a 70% decline in agricultural output in northeastern Nigeria. Farmlands have been abandoned as a result of the insecurity, agricultural infrastructure destroyed and farmers displaced, making it nearly impossible for them to cultivate their lands. Furthermore, Boko Haram has targeted food supplies by raiding villages, burning grain stores and blocking major agricultural trade routes (Nwosu and Okoli, 2023). According to a report by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2022), over 80% of farming households in conflict-affected areas of Borno State have either reduced their production or stopped farming entirely due to persistent attacks. This has contributed to severe food shortages and rising prices.

Additionally, the destruction of rural markets has made it difficult for farmers to sell their produce, further aggravating the crisis. In their study, Yusuf and Kwaja (2021) found that the disruption of local food supply chains has led to a 55% increase in the price of staple foods such as maize, millet and rice. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA, 2023) estimates that over 4.3 million people in Borno State are currently food insecure, with Maiduguri, Bama and Gwoza among the worst affected local Government Areas. Garba and Hassan (2020) observed that Boko Haram's deliberate attacks on farmlands, destruction of irrigation systems and theft of livestock have crippled food production in Borno State. Food shortages and price increases have been another critical outcome of the insurgency's disruption of livelihoods. About 60.5% of respondents strongly agreed and 22% agreed that food shortages and rising food prices have become more severe since the start of the insurgency. Garba and Hassan (2020) noted that attacks by Boko Haram on farming communities and supply chains have reduced food production and distribution, causing inflation and food scarcity. They observed that the increased costs of transporting goods due to road closures and security checkpoints have further driven up food prices, making basic commodities unaffordable for many households.

Displacement and Employment Challenges

Displacement has emerged as a major consequence of the insurgency, significantly affecting employment and livelihood stability. The survey shows that 59% of respondents strongly agreed and 18% agreed that displacement due to Boko Haram activities has affected their ability to work. Abdullahi and Ahmed (2021) noted that displacement not only separates people from their means of income such as farmlands, fishing grounds and trading centers,

but it also forces them into overcrowded and poorly resourced internally displaced persons (IDP) camps where economic opportunities are extremely limited. The findings align with Abdullahi and Ahmed's (2021) assertion that displacement disrupts established economic patterns and plunges displaced persons into cycles of dependency and poverty. The loss of property and livelihoods due to displacement has also widened the gap between rich and poor, increasing social inequality in affected communities. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC, 2023), over two million people have been displaced in Borno State, with Maiduguri, Bama and Gwoza among the most affected areas.

The forced migration of people from their traditional occupations such as farming, trading and fishing has created severe economic vulnerabilities. Many displaced individuals struggle to find alternative employment due to skill mismatches, economic decline and competition for scarce resources. According to Nur et al. (2022), over 65% of displaced persons in Maiduguri have no stable source of income, forcing many into informal and low paying jobs such as street vending, domestic work and begging. Furthermore, the displacement crisis has overburdened urban centers such as Maiduguri, where IDPs rely on humanitarian aid for survival. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2023) reported that due to the influx of displaced persons, resources in host communities have become overstretched, leading to increased unemployment and social tensions. Many IDPs, particularly women and youth, face limited economic opportunities, exacerbating poverty and food insecurity in resettlement camps. Okeke and John (2022) in their study pointed out that the limited reach of relief efforts and the growing number of displaced persons have made it difficult to meet the basic needs of the affected people.

Increased Economic Hardships

The insurgency has also had a devastating effect on businesses and economic activities. A significant proportion of survey respondents (56% strongly agreed, 27% agreed) indicated that attacks by Boko Haram have led to business closures and economic distress. These findings are in agreement with similar studies carried out by Mohammed and Garba (2021); Abdullahi and Ahmed who found that frequent attacks on commercial centers, markets and transport routes have crippled trade in the state. Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), which form the backbone of local commerce, have been particularly affected. The World Bank (2022) estimated that over 60% of businesses in Maiduguri, Bama and Gwoza have either shut down or significantly downsized due to insecurity. Markets such as the Monday Market in Maiduguri and the Bama Central Market have been attacked multiple times, discouraging traders and limiting access to essential goods and services. The destruction of transport infrastructure has further restricted the movement of goods, leading to reduced commercial activity and economic stagnation. Mohammed and Garba (2021) argued that Boko Haram attacks on markets and business centers have made it difficult for traders to operate, leading to economic stagnation and loss of income. The alignment between the survey responses and Mohammed and Garba's (2021) analysis reinforces the conclusion that the insurgency has stifled economic activity and created an environment where poverty and unemployment thrive.

In addition, the Borno Chamber of Commerce and Industry (2023) reported that due to the insurgency, the state's internally generated revenue (IGR) has dropped by nearly 45% over the past decade, affecting government capacity to provide public services and support

economic recovery initiatives. The persistent insecurity has also deterred external investors, further deepening the economic crisis in the state.

The economic impact of Boko Haram extends beyond business closures and displacement to direct income losses. Kutarju et al. (2024) found that nearly 80% of households in Borno reported income declines exceeding 50% due to job losses, reduced market access and the destruction of economic assets. According to Adamu and Usman (2021), a key factor contributing to income loss is the breakdown of rural-urban economic linkages. Before the insurgency, Bama and Gwoza played important roles in agricultural trade, supplying Maiduguri and other parts of Nigeria with farm produce. However, repeated Boko Haram attacks have cut off these supply routes, leading to reduced commercial activities and declining household earnings. The World Food Programme (WFP, 2023) estimated that livelihood losses in Borno State due to Boko Haram exceed \$5 billion, making economic recovery increasingly difficult.

As a result of widespread income loss, poverty levels have worsened in the state. Survey respondents confirmed that the insurgency had deepened poverty in their communities. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023), Borno State has one of the highest poverty rates in Nigeria, with over 70% of the population living below the national poverty line. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2022) also highlighted that poverty and economic hardships in conflict zones increase vulnerability to extremist recruitment, creating a cycle of violence and instability. Abdullahi and Ahmed, (2021) also argued that the destruction of businesses, displacement of workers, and loss of agricultural output have pushed many households into poverty. Reduced access to credit, the destruction of infrastructure, and the breakdown of social support networks have left many families without a means of survival. The survey findings align closely with Abdullahi and Ahmed's (2021) perspective that Boko Haram's insurgency has deepened economic vulnerability and widened the poverty gap in Borno State.

CONCLUSION

The Boko Haram insurgency has had a massive and multidimensional impact on livelihoods in Borno, particularly Maiduguri, Bama and Gwoza, exacerbating food insecurity, economic decline, displacement and poverty. The findings of this study confirm that the insurgency has severely disrupted agricultural production, resulting in widespread food shortages and soaring prices. Additionally, business closures and economic instability have left many households in financial distress, while displacement has further compounded the struggle for survival by limiting employment and income-generating opportunities. The results of the regression analysis reveal that Boko Haram insurgency has a statistically significant and negative impact on key livelihood indicators, confirming a strong association between insurgent activities and worsening living conditions in the affected local governments. This finding aligns with existing literature, which emphasizes that prolonged violent conflict not only threatens human security but also undermines the economic foundations necessary for sustainable development. The crisis in Borno has deepened poverty levels, reinforcing structural vulnerabilities and prolonging humanitarian dependence. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and sustainable approach that goes beyond military interventions. Counterinsurgency efforts are essential for restoring security, but equally important are sustainable economic recovery programs, agricultural revitalization and social

reintegration initiatives for displaced persons. Policies aimed at rebuilding local economies, restoring farmlands and improving access to basic services will be critical in fostering resilience and reducing vulnerability among those affected.

All in all, resolving the Boko Haram crisis and its impact on livelihoods necessitates a comprehensive strategy that integrates security, governance and economic development. A coordinated response involving the government, humanitarian organizations and local communities will be essential in rebuilding livelihoods, restoring stability and creating opportunities for economic empowerment in Borno State. Without deliberate and sustained interventions, the cycle of poverty and insecurity may persist, further hindering the state's long-term recovery and development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthen Security and Stability for Livelihood Restoration: The Nigerian government, in collaboration with security agencies, should intensify efforts to secure affected areas in Maiduguri, Bama and Gwoza. Establishing safe zones for farming and trade and enhancing community-based security initiatives will enable residents to resume their livelihoods without the constant threat of attacks. Special security arrangements should also be made to protect farmlands, markets and economic hubs from insurgent activities.

2. Implement Targeted Economic Recovery and Livelihood Support Programs: Economic interventions such as low-interest loans, vocational training and small business grants should be provided to individuals and households affected by the insurgency. The government and development partners should establish livelihood recovery funds aimed at supporting displaced persons, traders and farmers in rebuilding their economic activities. This will reduce dependence on humanitarian aid and foster long-term self-reliance.

3. Revitalize Agriculture and Strengthen Food Security Measures: Given the significant impact of the insurgency on food production, urgent measures should be taken to revive the agricultural sector. The government should provide seeds, fertilizers and farming tools to displaced farmers, while also offering agricultural extension services to help them recover lost productivity. Additionally, innovative approaches such as climate-smart agriculture and irrigation systems should be promoted to ensure food availability despite ongoing security challenges.

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