

The Political Economy of Terrorism in Nigeria: A Study of Boko Haram

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the political economy of terrorism in Nigeria, focusing on the Boko Haram insurgency through the lenses of Relative Deprivation Theory and Frustration–Aggression Theory. The study investigated the factors responsible for the emergence and persistence of Boko Haram, its socio-economic and governance implications, and the effectiveness of Nigeria’s counter-terrorism strategies. A qualitative research design was adopted, relying on secondary data obtained from journal articles, textbooks, policy reports, and relevant online sources. Findings revealed that Boko Haram’s rise is closely linked to widespread poverty, unemployment, corruption, weak governance, political exclusion, and regional inequalities in northern Nigeria. These conditions created feelings of deprivation, marginalization, and frustration among affected populations, thereby facilitating recruitment into extremist movements. The study further found that the insurgency has significantly undermined socio-economic development through the destruction of infrastructure, disruption of education and economic activities, mass displacement, humanitarian crises, and weakened state institutions, particularly in the North-East region. These consequences have deepened existing inequalities and reinforced cycles of poverty and insecurity. The study also revealed that although Nigeria’s counter-terrorism efforts have recorded some military successes in reducing Boko Haram’s territorial control and operational capacity, they have largely failed to address the underlying structural drivers of the insurgency. Consequently, Boko Haram has continued to persist in various adaptive forms. The study concluded that Boko Haram represents not only a security threat but also a manifestation of deeper socio-economic and governance challenges. It recommended, among others, targeted poverty reduction programmes, youth empowerment initiatives, improved access to education and vocational training, and strengthened governance reforms to address the root causes of terrorism and promote sustainable peace and development in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Boko Haram; Terrorism; Political Economy; Relative Deprivation; Counter-Terrorism*

Contribution/Originality: This study contributed to the literature by examining Boko Haram as both a security challenge and a manifestation of Nigeria’s socio-economic and governance problems. Its originality lies in integrating Relative Deprivation Theory and Frustration–Aggression Theory to explain how poverty, unemployment, inequality, political exclusion, and weak governance can create conditions that facilitate terrorist recruitment and persistence. The study further shifts attention from predominantly military responses to the structural causes of terrorism, emphasizing socio-economic development, youth empowerment, education, and governance reforms as essential components of sustainable counter-terrorism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite more than a decade of sustained military operations, emergency security measures, and counter-terrorism strategies implemented by successive Nigerian governments, Boko Haram remains a persistent and adaptive threat in the North-East region and, at times, other parts of the country. While these interventions have recorded intermittent tactical successes, they have largely failed to eliminate the insurgency or prevent its re-emergence in different forms. This pattern of mixed outcomes raises fundamental concerns about the adequacy of counter-terrorism responses that rely predominantly on kinetic military action without sufficiently addressing the underlying political and economic conditions that fuel the conflict (Adagbabiri & Okolie, 2017).

Existing studies indicate that Boko Haram is not merely a product of religious extremism but is deeply rooted in Nigeria's unresolved structural challenges, including poverty, inequality, political exclusion, and weak state capacity. Igbokwu et al. (2015) conceptualize Boko Haram as a manifestation of Nigeria's unresolved national question, arguing that persistent governance failures and socio-economic marginalization have created fertile ground for violent dissent. Similarly, Ikenga and Efebeh (2013) contend that the group's emergence and expansion are closely linked to widespread deprivation, youth unemployment, and the inability of the Nigerian state to provide basic services and opportunities, particularly in the northern regions.

Furthermore, the economic consequences of Boko Haram's activities have been extensive and debilitating. Terrorist violence has destroyed lives and property, disrupted agricultural production and trade, forced the displacement of populations, and led to the collapse of local economies in affected areas. Efebeh and Johnson (2023) note that terrorism imposes high economic costs on developing countries by discouraging investment, reducing productivity, and diverting scarce public resources toward security expenditures at the expense of development. In Nigeria's North-East, these economic disruptions have deepened poverty levels, weakened human capital development through school closures and displacement, and reinforced cycles of dependency and insecurity.

Beyond domestic economic impacts, Boko Haram has also damaged Nigeria's international image and diplomatic standing. The persistent portrayal of Nigeria as a hotspot of terrorism has affected foreign investment flows, tourism prospects, and international confidence in the country's capacity to manage internal security challenges (Efebeh & Efanodor, 2016). This negative external perception further compounds Nigeria's economic and governance challenges, reinforcing the urgency of understanding terrorism beyond its immediate security dimensions.

Despite the growing body of literature on Boko Haram, much of the existing scholarship emphasizes ideological motivations, religious narratives, or military counter-insurgency tactics. There remains a relative paucity of systematic studies that interrogate the political economy dimensions of the insurgency, specifically how economic deprivation, governance failures, elite interests, and state capacity interact to sustain violent extremism. Adagbabiri and Okolie (2017) argue that the persistence of Boko Haram reflects not only security lapses but also structural contradictions within Nigeria's political and economic systems, including corruption, weak institutions, and uneven development.

Moreover, the continued reliance on militarized responses has often overlooked how governance deficits and development failures undermine the effectiveness of counter-terrorism policies. Idisi and Orhero (2025) demonstrate that terrorism in Nigeria poses a significant obstacle to sustainable development by weakening institutions,

disrupting long-term planning, and eroding public trust in the state. Without addressing these underlying political and economic drivers, counter-terrorism strategies risk remaining reactive, costly, and unsustainable.

The central problem, therefore, is the lack of a comprehensive political economy analysis that explains the rise, sustenance, and impacts of Boko Haram within Nigeria's broader socio-economic and governance context. There was a pressing need to conduct a systematic investigation into how economic hardship, limited state capacity, governance weaknesses, and the interests of political elites have fueled the insurgency, and to examine how these factors influence the effectiveness of counter-terrorism measures. Addressing this gap is essential for developing more effective, inclusive, and sustainable responses to terrorism in Nigeria. The general objective of this study was to examine the political economy of terrorism in Nigeria, focusing on Boko Haram. While the specific objectives were to:

- i. Investigate the factors that have contributed to the rise and persistence of Boko Haram in Nigeria.
- ii. Analyze the effects of Boko Haram insurgency on Nigeria's socio-economic development and governance.
- iii. Evaluate the effectiveness of Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategies from a political-economic perspective.

The study answers the following research questions:

- i. What factors have contributed to the rise and persistence of Boko Haram in Nigeria?
- ii. How has the Boko Haram insurgency affected Nigeria's socio-economic development and governance?
- iii. How effectively have Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategies addressed the political economy of Nigeria?

Literature Review

Factors Contributing to the Rise and Persistence of Boko Haram in Nigeria

The emergence and persistence of Boko Haram are rooted in interconnected political, socio-economic, religious, and security challenges in Nigeria, particularly in the North-East. Rather than a single cause, the insurgency reflects deep structural inequalities, governance failures, ideological exploitation, and regional instability that have sustained the group despite prolonged military campaigns (Dim, 2017; Adediji, 2024).

Poverty, unemployment, and socio-economic deprivation remain major drivers of the insurgency. High levels of poverty, youth unemployment, and limited economic opportunities in northern Nigeria have increased vulnerability to extremist recruitment. Boko Haram has exploited economic frustration by providing financial incentives, social identity, and a sense of belonging to marginalized youths (Makai, 2024; Zeng, 2024). According to Dim (2017), structural unemployment and social alienation have made many young people susceptible to radicalization.

Weak governance and corruption have further contributed to Boko Haram's growth. Ineffective public institutions, poor service delivery, and widespread corruption have weakened state legitimacy and created governance vacuums that extremist groups have exploited (Uadiale, 2023; Zeng, 2024). Corruption within security institutions has also undermined counterterrorism efforts and reduced military effectiveness (Adediji, 2024).

Religious extremism and ideological manipulation have provided Boko Haram with a framework for mobilization. The group uses a radical interpretation of Islam to reject Western education and secular governance while exploiting socio-economic grievances to attract followers (Igboin, 2022; Adedeji, 2024).

Political exclusion, elite competition, and historical marginalization have reinforced feelings of injustice and deprivation. Regional inequalities, low educational attainment, and uneven development between northern and southern Nigeria have created conditions that extremist groups exploit for recruitment and propaganda (Uadiale, 2023; Adedeji, 2024; Zeng, 2024).

The persistence of Boko Haram is also linked to security sector weaknesses, including poor intelligence gathering, inadequate coordination among security agencies, corruption, and inconsistent counterinsurgency strategies. The emergence of factions such as ISWAP has further increased the group's adaptability and resilience (Igboin, 2022).

Finally, regional and cross-border dynamics within the Lake Chad Basin have sustained the insurgency. Porous borders facilitate the movement of fighters, weapons, and resources, while weak border control and regional instability provide opportunities for insurgent operations and recruitment (Adedeji, 2024; Zeng, 2024). Overall, Boko Haram's rise and persistence result from the interaction of poverty, unemployment, weak governance, corruption, ideological manipulation, political exclusion, historical marginalization, security weaknesses, and regional instability. Addressing the insurgency therefore requires not only military responses but also comprehensive socio-economic and governance reforms (Dim, 2017; Adedeji, 2024).

How the Boko Haram Insurgency Has Affected Nigeria's Socio-Economic Development and Governance

The Boko Haram insurgency has had severe consequences for Nigeria's socio-economic development and governance, particularly in the North-East. Since 2009, the conflict has evolved into a major security and development crisis, undermining economic activities, governance institutions, and social stability (Agbiboa, 2013; Onapajo & Uzodike, 2012).

One of its most significant impacts is the destruction of infrastructure and economic disruption. Boko Haram has targeted schools, hospitals, markets, roads, and government facilities, leading to the abandonment of communities and disruption of agricultural and commercial activities. Reduced food production, declining investment, disrupted trade, and rising business costs have contributed to economic stagnation and increased regional inequality (Okafor & Piesse, 2018; Abubakar & Young, 2019). The insurgency has also created a major humanitarian crisis, displacing millions of people within Nigeria and across neighbouring countries. Internally displaced persons face food insecurity, poor healthcare, limited education, and inadequate living conditions. The crisis has increased poverty, dependence on humanitarian aid, and vulnerability to exploitation and radicalization (IOM, 2022; Manu et al., 2024; Adesoji, 2019).

Another major consequence is the collapse of education and human capital development. Boko Haram's attacks on schools, including the Chibok schoolgirls' abduction, have forced millions of children out of school. This has reduced literacy levels, widened gender inequality, and weakened the future workforce, creating a generation with limited educational opportunities (UNESCO, 2021; Saeed, 2024; Danladi et al., 2020). The insurgency has further weakened governance and state legitimacy. Persistent insecurity has disrupted local administration, electoral processes,

and public service delivery, reducing citizens' trust in government institutions. In some areas, governance gaps have enabled extremist groups to gain influence by presenting themselves as alternative authorities (Onapajo & Uzodike, 2012; Emmanuel et al., 2025; Agbiboa, 2013).

Additionally, Boko Haram has placed enormous pressure on Nigeria's security architecture, exposing weaknesses in intelligence, logistics, funding, and inter-agency coordination. Prolonged military operations and allegations of human rights abuses have sometimes weakened public confidence in security institutions (Thurston, 2017; Amnesty International, 2021). Economically, the conflict has discouraged domestic and foreign investment, increased unemployment, and diverted public resources from development projects to security and humanitarian responses. This has slowed economic growth and widened the development gap between the North-East and other regions of Nigeria (Nekari, 2025; Iyekekpolor & Aghedo, 2020).

The insurgency has also caused social fragmentation and psychological trauma. Violence, displacement, and loss of livelihoods have weakened community cohesion, eroded trust, and increased psychological distress among affected populations, making post-conflict recovery more difficult (Manu et al., 2024; Okafor & Piesse, 2018). Overall, Boko Haram has undermined Nigeria's socio-economic development and governance by destroying infrastructure, displacing populations, disrupting education, weakening institutions, discouraging investment, and eroding social cohesion. These impacts demonstrate that the insurgency is not only a security challenge but also a broader development and governance crisis requiring comprehensive and long-term solutions. (Agbiboa, 2013; Onapajo & Uzodike, 2012).

Effectiveness of Nigeria's Counter-Terrorism Strategies in Addressing Political Economy Challenges

Nigeria's response to Boko Haram has combined military operations, intelligence gathering, community-based security initiatives, deradicalization programmes, and regional cooperation. While these measures have achieved some success in reducing Boko Haram's territorial control and large-scale attacks, their effectiveness in addressing underlying political economy challenges such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, weak governance, and institutional fragility remains limited (Agbiboa, 2013; Ike et al., 2022).

The military has been central to Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy. Supported by the Multinational Joint Task Force, security forces have reclaimed territories once controlled by Boko Haram and weakened the group's conventional operational capacity (Agbiboa, 2013). However, Boko Haram has adapted by fragmenting into smaller factions, including ISWAP, enabling it to continue attacks through guerrilla tactics and rural insurgency. This demonstrates the limitations of a predominantly military approach that does not address the socio-economic roots of extremism (Owojori et al., 2021; Thurston, 2017).

Community-based initiatives such as the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) have improved intelligence gathering and local security. Nevertheless, inadequate training, funding challenges, and allegations of human rights abuses have limited their long-term impact on the structural causes of insecurity (Agbiboa, 2013; Gana, 2019). Similarly, deradicalization and rehabilitation programmes have sought to reintegrate former insurgents through education, vocational training, and psychological support. While important for post-conflict stabilization, concerns about public acceptance, weak

monitoring systems, and possible recidivism have reduced their effectiveness (Ike et al., 2022).

A major weakness of Nigeria's counter-terrorism efforts is the persistence of corruption, poor coordination, weak intelligence sharing, and mismanagement within the security sector. These institutional challenges undermine operational effectiveness and reflect broader governance failures (Okoko et al., 2024). Furthermore, increased defence spending has diverted resources from education, healthcare, infrastructure, and employment generation, limiting efforts to address the root causes of insurgency. As a result, poverty, unemployment, and regional inequality continue to fuel insecurity, particularly in the North-East (Nekari, 2025; Iorliam et al., 2021).

Regional cooperation through the Multinational Joint Task Force has also faced challenges, including funding constraints, intelligence-sharing gaps, and porous borders that facilitate the movement of fighters and weapons across the Lake Chad Basin (Ike et al., 2022). Despite these limitations, Nigeria has recorded important gains, including the recapture of major territories and a decline in large-scale attacks. However, Boko Haram remains active and adaptive, particularly in rural areas where state presence is weak (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2025; Reuters, 2026). Overall, Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategies have been partially successful in weakening Boko Haram militarily but have been less effective in addressing the deeper political economy factors that sustain the insurgency. Sustainable peace, therefore, requires a balanced approach that combines security measures with governance reforms, poverty reduction, job creation, institutional strengthening, and regional cooperation.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Relative Deprivation Theory and the Frustration–Aggression Theory, which provide a useful framework for explaining the emergence, persistence, and impacts of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

Relative Deprivation Theory

The Relative Deprivation Theory was developed by Ted Robert Gurr (1970) in *Why Men Rebel*. The theory argues that violence and social unrest arise when individuals or groups perceive a gap between their expectations and their actual socio-economic or political conditions. Feelings of frustration, resentment, and injustice emerge when people believe they are unfairly deprived compared to others or to what they feel entitled to receive (Gurr, 1970; Runciman, 1986).

The theory emphasizes that deprivation is largely subjective; it is the perception of inequality and exclusion rather than poverty alone that motivates collective action. In the context of Boko Haram, widespread poverty, unemployment, limited educational opportunities, poor service delivery, and political marginalization in Northern Nigeria have created feelings of exclusion and injustice among many youths. Boko Haram exploits these grievances by portraying the government as responsible for their hardships and presenting insurgency as a means of redress (Adagbabiri & Okolie, 2017; Efebeh & Johnson, 2023; Saleh, 2025).

Empirical studies show that areas characterized by poverty, youth unemployment, and weak institutional presence have experienced higher levels of Boko Haram activity (Eme & Ugwu, 2024; Mbanwusi, 2024). The theory, therefore, explains how socio-economic and political deprivation can encourage recruitment into extremist movements.

Frustration–Aggression Theory

The Frustration–Aggression Theory was developed by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears (1939). The theory argues that aggression often results from frustration, which occurs when individuals or groups are prevented from achieving desired goals. Later, Berkowitz (1962, 1989) refined the theory by arguing that frustration creates anger and aggressive tendencies that may lead to violence when triggered by environmental or social cues.

The theory is useful in explaining how persistent poverty, unemployment, political exclusion, insecurity, and deprivation generate frustration that may manifest as aggression and violence. In Nigeria's North-East, prolonged hardship, displacement, loss of livelihoods, and weak governance have created widespread frustration among affected populations. Boko Haram exploits these conditions by offering economic incentives, protection, and ideological justification for violence (Breuer & Elson, 2017; Igbini & Efebeh, 2022).

The theory also explains why aggression may be directed at government institutions, communities, or other perceived sources of hardship. Where opportunities for peaceful grievance resolution are limited, frustrated individuals are more likely to support or participate in violent movements (Berkowitz, 1989; Igbini et al., 2023).

Application of the Theories to the Study

The Relative Deprivation Theory explains how perceptions of inequality, marginalization, and exclusion in Nigeria's North-East create conditions that encourage support for Boko Haram. The Frustration–Aggression Theory complements this by explaining how these feelings of deprivation translate into aggression and violent behaviour.

Together, the theories provide a comprehensive explanation of Boko Haram insurgency by linking structural factors such as poverty, unemployment, weak governance, corruption, and political exclusion with the psychological processes that encourage radicalization and violence. They demonstrate that Boko Haram is not merely a security problem but also a product of deeper socio-economic, political, and psychological conditions. Consequently, sustainable solutions require not only military responses but also governance reforms, poverty reduction, youth empowerment, and inclusive development initiatives that address the root causes of insecurity.

2. METHOD

The study adopts a historical research design, which is appropriate for examining events and patterns over time to understand causes, impacts, and developments (Best & Kahn, 2016). Historical research involves the systematic collection, evaluation, and interpretation of records and events to draw inferences about contemporary phenomena. In the context of this study, historical research will facilitate an in-depth understanding of Boko Haram's emergence, evolution, and socio-economic impacts from the early 2000s to 2025.

This design is particularly suitable because Boko Haram's insurgency is a product of cumulative socio-political, economic, and governance conditions that require longitudinal assessment. By reviewing past incidents, government interventions, and socio-economic data, the study seeks to uncover patterns that link structural factors to insurgency dynamics.

Area of Study

The study concentrated on Nigeria's North-East region, which encompasses the states of Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, and Taraba. This region has historically been the epicenter of Boko Haram insurgency, experiencing the brunt of violent attacks, mass abductions, and armed confrontations with the Nigerian security forces since the early 2000s. As a result, the North-East has suffered significant human, social, and economic costs, including large-scale internal displacement, destruction of infrastructure, and erosion of livelihoods. Over the years, millions of residents have been forced to flee their homes, leading to overcrowded camps and heightened social vulnerability, particularly among women, children, and youth populations.

Structurally, the North-East is characterized by underdevelopment, with pervasive poverty, high rates of unemployment, low access to quality education, and inadequate healthcare facilities. Weak governance, corruption, and limited state capacity further exacerbate the region's socio-economic challenges, leaving communities susceptible to recruitment by Boko Haram. These structural conditions, coupled with political exclusion and historical marginalization relative to other regions of Nigeria, have created an environment in which insurgent groups can thrive, gain local support, and perpetuate cycles of violence.

Focusing on this region will allow the study to capture localized socio-political and economic dynamics that may not be apparent in other parts of the country. It provides insight into the intersection of governance, economic deprivation, and insurgency at both the community and state levels. Examining the North-East also facilitates an understanding of how counter-terrorism measures, both military and socio-economic, have succeeded or failed in mitigating Boko Haram's influence. By studying the lived experiences of affected communities, patterns of insurgent recruitment, and regional responses to insecurity, the research can contextualize Boko Haram within the political economy of terrorism in Nigeria.

Figure 1: North-East region Map of Nigeria



Source: Kassim & Uke (2024)

Moreover, the North-East serves as a representative case study for understanding broader insurgency dynamics in similar conflict-prone regions, highlighting how structural inequalities, governance deficits, and socio-economic deprivation interact to

fuel violent extremism. Insights gained from this region can inform not only national security strategies but also development and governance policies aimed at long-term stabilization and resilience-building.

Methods of Data Collection

Data for this study were collected through the documentary review method, which involved the systematic examination of existing written materials relevant to the study. Sources included government and security reports, peer-reviewed journal articles, books, media reports, and publications from international organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, and ECOWAS. Government reports provided information on counter-terrorism policies and security responses, while academic literature offered theoretical and empirical insights into Boko Haram's emergence, persistence, and socio-economic impacts. Media reports supplied contemporary accounts of insurgent activities and their effects on communities, whereas international publications provided data on poverty, unemployment, education, governance, and development challenges in the North-East. The use of multiple documentary sources enabled a comprehensive understanding of the political, economic, and social factors associated with the Boko Haram insurgency and ensured that the study was grounded in credible and verifiable evidence.

Method of Data Analysis

The study employed content analysis to analyze the collected data. Content analysis is a qualitative technique used to identify, interpret, and categorize recurring themes, patterns, and meanings within textual materials (Krippendorff, 2019). Through this method, data obtained from government reports, academic publications, media sources, and international documents were systematically examined to identify the factors responsible for the emergence and persistence of Boko Haram, its socio-economic and governance impacts, and the effectiveness of counter-terrorism strategies. The method also facilitated the analysis of patterns in insurgent activities, recruitment strategies, and state responses. Content analysis was considered appropriate because it enabled the systematic interpretation of diverse documentary sources and provided a coherent understanding of the relationship between governance, socio-economic conditions, and insurgency in Nigeria's North-East.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main findings of the study are presented as follows:

- i. The study found that Boko Haram's rise and persistence are driven by poverty, unemployment, weak governance, corruption, political exclusion, and regional inequality, which created conditions for recruitment and weakened trust in the state.
- ii. The study revealed that the insurgency has severely damaged Nigeria's socio-economic development and governance through infrastructure destruction,

displacement, economic disruption, educational decline, humanitarian crises, and weakened institutions, especially in the North-East.

- iii. The study showed that Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategies achieved limited military success in reducing Boko Haram's territorial control but failed to address the underlying structural causes of insecurity, such as poverty, unemployment, corruption, weak governance, and underdevelopment.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that the emergence and persistence of Boko Haram are closely linked to poverty, unemployment, weak governance, corruption, political exclusion, and regional inequality in northern Nigeria. These conditions created widespread frustration, marginalization, and social vulnerability, making many youths susceptible to extremist recruitment and radicalization. Weak governance and poor service delivery further eroded public confidence in government institutions, while corruption and political exclusion undermined state legitimacy and strengthened anti-state narratives. This finding supports the studies of Dim (2017), Makai (2024), Zeng (2024), Uadiale (2023), Igboin (2022), and Adedeji (2024), who similarly identified socio-economic deprivation, governance failure, and inequality as key drivers of Boko Haram insurgency. The finding, therefore, demonstrates that Boko Haram is not merely a religious or security challenge but a broader political economy crisis rooted in structural deprivation and governance deficits.

The study also found that Boko Haram insurgency has severely undermined Nigeria's socio-economic development and governance. The destruction of schools, hospitals, markets, roads, and other critical infrastructure disrupted economic activities, reduced productivity, and weakened access to essential services. The insurgency further generated large-scale displacement, humanitarian crises, educational decline, and weakened governance institutions, particularly in the North-East. These findings are consistent with Agbiboa (2013), Onapajo and Uzodike (2012), Okafor and Piesse (2018), Abubakar and Young (2019), Manu et al. (2024), Adesoji (2019), Saeed (2024), and Danladi et al. (2020), who emphasized the developmental, humanitarian, and governance consequences of Boko Haram activities. The findings indicate that the insurgency constitutes both a security and development challenge requiring integrated policy responses.

Furthermore, the study revealed that Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategies have achieved partial success in reducing Boko Haram's territorial control and operational capacity but have been less effective in addressing the structural causes of insecurity. Persistent poverty, unemployment, corruption, weak governance, and underdevelopment continue to sustain violent extremism despite military interventions. The findings support the works of Agbiboa (2013), Owojori et al. (2021), Thurston (2017), Iyekekpolor and Aghedo (2020), Ike et al. (2022), Okoko et al. (2024), and Nekari (2025), who argued that military measures alone cannot ensure sustainable peace. The study therefore concludes that effective counter-terrorism requires a comprehensive approach that combines security operations with socio-economic development, governance reforms, institutional strengthening, and regional cooperation.

4. CONCLUSION

The study found that the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria is deeply rooted in structural political economy and governance challenges rather than being solely a security or ideological issue. It found that factors such as poverty, unemployment, weak governance, corruption, political exclusion, and regional inequality in northern Nigeria created conditions that facilitated the emergence and persistence of the group by increasing socio-economic vulnerability and weakening trust in state institutions. The study further found that the Boko Haram insurgency has had severe negative consequences on Nigeria's socio-economic development and governance. These include the destruction of infrastructure, mass displacement of people, disruption of economic activities, decline in educational development, worsening humanitarian conditions, and weakening of government institutions, particularly in the North-East region. These impacts have collectively deepened underdevelopment and widened regional disparities.

In addition, the study found that Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategies achieved only partial military success in reducing Boko Haram's territorial control and operational capacity. However, these efforts did not adequately address the underlying structural drivers of insecurity. As a result, poverty, unemployment, corruption, weak governance, and underdevelopment have continued to sustain the insurgency in different forms. Overall, the study found that Boko Haram represents both a security challenge and a reflection of deeper socio-economic and governance deficiencies in Nigeria. In conclusion, sustainable peace and stability require a shift from a predominantly military approach to a more comprehensive strategy that integrates socio-economic development, institutional reforms, inclusive governance, and regional cooperation. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The government should prioritize targeted poverty alleviation programmes, job creation initiatives, and youth empowerment schemes, particularly in the North-East. Expanding access to quality education, vocational training, and entrepreneurship support will help reduce unemployment and limit the pool of individuals vulnerable to extremist recruitment.
- ii. There is a need to strengthen anti-corruption frameworks, ensure transparent management of public resources, and enhance service delivery across all levels of government. Key institutions in the education, healthcare, and security sectors should be reinforced to rebuild public trust and address the governance deficits that contribute to insecurity.
- iii. Nigeria should complement military operations with long-term development and peacebuilding strategies. This includes addressing the root causes of insecurity through inclusive governance, balanced regional development, community participation in security efforts, and effective rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for affected populations, rather than relying predominantly on military responses.

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