



Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: Advancing Policy Options for a Lasting Solution

Olumide. O. Omodunbi¹, Adebowale. I. Adeyeye², Richard. A. Ige³

Abstract: Nigeria as a country has witnessed different forms of violence, armed conflicts and criminality in many forms in the last two decades. However, the emergence of the democratic fourth republic has witnessed a new form of violence perpetuated by the Boko haram sect, especially in the North-eastern part of Nigeria. The activities of the sect have led to loss of lives, properties and displacement of people from their ancestral homes. And in a bid to end the menace occasioned by the activities of Boko Haram, successive administration has found counter-terrorism a herculean task that looks impossible to achieve over the years. Using quantitative method and relying on the youth bulge and relative deprivation theories; the study revealed some of the most prevalent causes of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria and suggested policy measures that can be used in combating the activities of the Boko Haram insurgents. The paper found that some of the causes of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria include but are not limited to unemployment, lack of proper education by majority of the youths and the high rate of poverty in the Northeast. The study recommends that the government should engage in community-based dialogues and intelligence gathering, increased military operation and effective collaboration between the various agencies of government involved in the fight against Boko Haram for a lasting solution.

Keywords: Boko Haram; Insurgency; Nigeria; Unemployment; Poverty

¹ Department of Political Science, Osun State University, Osogbo, Nigeria, Address: Main Campus, Oke Bale Street, Area 210001, Osogbo, Nigeria, Corresponding author: olumideomodunbi@gmail.com.

² PhD, Department of Political Science, Osun State University, Osogbo, Nigeria, Address: Main Campus, Oke Bale Street, Area 210001, Osogbo, Nigeria, E-mail: adebowaleadeyeye2610@gmail.com.

³ Department of Political Science, Osun State University, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria, Address: Main Campus, Oke Bale Street, Area 210001, Osogbo, Nigeria, E-mail: Richardige6@gmail.com.

Introduction

Nigeria has witnessed insecurity and criminality in various forms in the last two decades ranging from armed robbery, arms smuggling, human trafficking, and militancy. However, the greatest security challenge facing the country after the return to democracy in 1999 is the *Boko Haram* insurgency. The group *Boko Haram* is an Islamic sect that is poised to create an Islamic state in Nigeria based on Sharia. (Odo, 2015). Other scholars have also argued that due to the nature of their operational dynamic; they are promoting all manners of criminality and undermining Islam, hence has referred to them as a sect that promote haram Islam (Ani & Chukwu, 2014).

Sani (2011) links the origin of Boko Haram to the Sahaba group that began in 1995 under the headship of Abubakar Lawan whose departure to Medina for further study led to the ascendancy of Muhammed Yusuf as the leader. Johnson (2011) on the other hand opines that the group (*Boko Haram*) started in Maiduguri, Borno State in 2002. It is important to state that the group became notoriously violent since 2002 under Muhammed Yusuf with the intention to, at least, subsume the northern part of the country to Islamic theocracy (Ojo, 2010). The sect holds the philosophy that the system of banking, taxation, and the legal system should be discarded because they are contrary to the principle of Allah (Sani, 2011). It is in the sect's opinion that religious weakness should be blamed on western values; hence, their sordid attempt to wantonly eliminate every trace of such, (Sani, 2011). Therefore, the basic solution to this, according to the sect, is to establish a society that is based on Islamic injunctions and the destruction of modern state institution (Danjibo, 2009).

Boko Haram insurgency has been the major problem facing the Nigerian state in the recent time. The group has carried out several bombing that have led to the loss of lives and properties worth billions of naira (Ajayi, 2011). This derives from their bid to make people in the North East geo-political zone of Nigeria to embrace their Islamic view against western education. The predominant threat and security challenges in the area are emanating from un-abating attacks on Nigerian citizens, as well as public and governmental installations, kidnapping and destruction of properties.

Politically, there have been diverse views on how to tackle the *Boko Haram* insurgency. According to (Cody, 2007), he opined that the duty of defining what terrorist and counterterrorism involves lies at the table of those at the helm of affairs and so the ball is in the policy- makers' court. From the forgoing, the government

has dedicated itself to counter terrorism measures ranging from negotiation and amnesty for *Boko Haram*, to the redistribution of national wealth, and political power that would favour the northern region especially in the immediate past administration of President Goodluck Jonathan (Eyehole, 2013).

Fighting terrorism continues to be a big challenge among Nigerian stakeholders, there seems to be a lack of consensus as to how to fight terrorism. For instance, there is disagreement between the federal government and the affected state government on how to curb the activities of the *Boko Haram* insurgents. Whereas the federal government relies on military powers, the state government prefers to embark on a policy of negotiation with *Boko Haram*; Southerners see little reasons for that. Domestically, these arrangements have divided Christians and Muslims, the People's Democratic Party and other political parties. On the international stage, the Nigerian government loyalty is seriously divided between the western and Muslim worlds (Oyewole, 2013). It is for this reason that this study advanced policy measures that can be used to tackle the *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Insurgency is derived from Latin word meaning rising upon or against. U.S counter insurgency guide (2009) defines it as an organized use of violence to seize, nullify or challenge political control of a region. This is almost similar to the definition of David (2012:26) as he views the concept as a well calculated and planned resistant movement that employs armed conflicts, sabotage to achieve its aims. Insurgencies usually aim at overthrowing existing social order and reallocate power within the country. Often times, it does not operate through military style command structure but involves a complex matrix of different actors with various aims, loosely connected in dynamic and non-hierarchical networks. To Arnold (2013:126) insurgency is the act propelled by individuals who rise in forcible opposition to lawful authority, especially when it engages in armed resistance to a government or to the execution of its laws. Galula David (1964) in counter insurgency warfare, described insurgency as a prolonged struggle conducted systematically with the aim of achieving specific intermediate goals leading to the overthrow of the existing order. However, Anthony B. Aguilar (2014) asserts that the spread of insurgencies all over the world amongst failing centers of nation state authority, account for over 75 percent of militarized disputes since 1945.

Furthermore, Bruscinio Thomas (2006) says insurgency is not a modern-day phenomenon. In the past, groups have engaged in Guerilla style warfare against established power. Byman Daniel (2001) sees insurgency as consisting of range of activities, most notable guerilla warfare, but also political mobilization and attendant efforts to attract support from abroad. In Nigeria, Boko haram a radical Islamist extremist group has not only been labeled as an insurgent group but also a terrorist group because of the act of terror that has been unleashed on victims in the time past. In fact, Boko Haram terrorism has claimed more than 4000 lives since 2009. Due to its brutality, sustained and profiled target of attacks and links with international terrorist network that include Al-shabaab in East Africa and Al Qaida in the Maghreb, the threat of Boko Haram terrorism has qualified it as an international terrorist group (Carter Ham, 2011)

Terrorism is an emotionally connected phenomenon (Wright-Neville and Smith, 2009; Cottee and Hayward, 2011). Downes-le Guine and Hoffman (1993:1) assert that if any objective will be attained, terrorists rely on manipulating public reaction and opinion to put the target government in difficult position. To Kydd and Walter (2006) terrorism is a strategy with symbolic nature which aims at the audience which is often refers to as second victim. To Spencer (2006) terrorism offers a poor metric, thus one of the ways to evaluate success in counter terrorism is the extent of confidence secured from the population.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, the Youth Bulge theory and Relative Deprivation theory was explored in providing an insight into the analysis of the *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria. The Youth Bulge theory remains significant in explaining the emergence and nature of *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria. Heinsohn (2006) offered the most comprehensive form of the Youth Bulge theory. He argued that Youth Bulge occurs when 30 to 40 percent of the males of a nation belong to the fighting age cohorts from 15 to 29 years. Since there is a widened gap between the growths of basic social amenities such as jobs, food, infrastructures and population, which grows astronomically, and force angry young men find themselves in a situation that tends to escalate their adolescent anger into political violence. From Heinsohn (2006) assertion, the high birth rate in the Northern part of Nigeria which is closely linked to the polygamous value that is attainable within the Islamic setting provides an imminent population from which *Boko Haram* recruits their members who

perpetuate wanton political violence. As a result of low religious status of Nigerians as well as economic crisis and poor educational development of the citizenry, the *Boko Haram* sect has a lot of advantage to flourish. Huntington (1993) having revised his theory of civilization to suit the philosophy of Youth Bulge theory opines that “I don’t think Islam is any more violent than any other religion and I suspect that more people have been slaughtered by Christians over the centuries than Muslims”. Despite this violence, some scholars like Danjibo 2009 have endeavored to conclude that Islamic religion is in itself not violent and that true Muslim does not engage in any form of violence in the name of God and that Islam is interpreted to mean peace. (Ahmad, 1989) therefore maintains that religion is not the exploiter, it is itself exploited by internal or external political interests. It is then accurate to state that religion, irrespective of its form, has been exploited by individuals and groups to further their personal agenda. Islam in particular is not immune from this trend.

Gurr (1970) expounds the relative deprivation theory and presents the effects of other discrepancy between value expectations and value capabilities. This is what the people expect and when expectations are not met, it can trigger political violence. In view of this, one can argue that the emergence of *Boko Haram* is an extension of frustration which consequently manifest into aggression given the inability to meet up with the social desires of the masses to be gainfully employed.

Hashmi (2009) aligns with this line of thought when he avers that a religious or linguistic minority might suffer disproportionately in a given society, and this form of grievance can lead to unrest across the social lines. Therefore, the failure of good governance is a central catalyst for political violence and a vital explanation for the emergence of the *Boko Haram* in northern Nigeria. It is also useful to note that the major area of operation, North-East has the highest percentage of people living below poverty line (72.2%) (Danjibo, 2009, Adeyeye, 2017). Hence, religion is not only an excuse to engage in such parade of attacks that the area in question has witnessed, it is more sufficient to explain the totality of *Boko Haram* in the face of economic deformity/backwardness, lack of educational facility and general awareness cum the existence of wide gap between expectation and acquisition.

Research Methodology

The study employed both primary and secondary sources of data collection. Secondary data were sourced from books, journals, newspapers, internet sources, magazines and other published and unpublished materials. These secondary sources of data provided extensive bibliographic and contextual information that supported the primary sources of data meaningfully. The primary data was sourced through the administration of questionnaire. The study adopted a descriptive design which involves a systematic collection, presentation and analysis of data on the causes and policy option that can be used to address the *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria. It employed a quantitative research method which implies collection of data through the administration of questionnaire. The study was conducted in Abuja and Edo states. The FCT Abuja and Edo camps were purposively selected on the basis of a relatively secured environment to conduct the survey. The study population includes, internally displaced persons (IDPs), security officials and National Emergency Management Agency officials. A total of 384 respondents were identified based on the fact that some of them were direct victim and beneficiaries of soothing programmes of the government, some have adequate knowledge of the *Boko Haram* insurgency, while others were selected because of their management activity relating to the victims of *Boko Haram* insurgency. Considering the total number of IDPs in Nigeria which the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) puts at 2.2 million, and using the position of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) on sampling, a total number of 384 IDPs, officials of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and security agents were be selected equally between the Edo and FCT camps for questionnaire administration using simple random sampling techniques. Specifically, 172 IDPs, 10 NEMA officials and 10 security personnel were selected in each camp. The data collected were subjected to descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics employed in this study are the use of simple frequencies, score count, percentage, tables and bar charts.

**Socio-Demographic Data and Political Participation of Respondents. Distribution of
Socio-Demographic Data of Questionnaire Respondents**

s/ n	Variables	Options	Frequenc y	Percent t (%)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulativ e Percent (%)
1.	State Origin of	Borno	219	57.0	57.0	57.0
		Adamawa	53	13.8	13.8	70.8
		Yobe	51	13.3	13.3	84.1
		Gombe	24	6.3	6.3	90.4
		Rivers	4	1.0	1.0	91.4
		Zamfara	1	.3	.3	91.7
		Oyo	5	1.3	1.3	93.0
		Kastina	3	.8	.8	93.8
		Benue	5	1.3	1.3	95.1
		Kano	1	.3	.3	95.3
		Nasarawa	1	.3	.3	95.6
		FCT	2	.5	.5	96.1
		Niger	2	.5	.5	96.6
		Kogi	8	2.1	2.1	98.7
		Edo	5	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	384	100.0	100.0		
2.	Occupation	IDP	344	89.6	89.6	89.6
		Security Officer	20	5.2	5.2	94.8
		NEMA	20	5.2	5.2	100.0
		Total	384	100.0	100.0	
3.	Sex	Male	252	65.6	65.6	65.6
		Female	132	34.4	34.4	100.0
		Total	384	100.0	100.0	
4.	Age	21-30	207	53.9	53.9	53.9
		31-40	119	31.0	31.0	84.9
		41-50	46	12.0	12.0	96.9
		51-60	11	2.9	2.9	99.7
		61 and above	1	.3	.3	100.0
		Total	384	100.0	100.0	
5.	Religion	Christianit y	256	66.7	66.7	66.7
		Islam	120	31.3	31.3	97.9
		Others	8	2.1	2.1	100.0
		Total	384	100.0	100.0	

6.	Educational Qualification	No Formal education	52	13.5	13.5	13.5
		Primary Education	100	26.0	26.0	39.6
		Secondary Education	196	51.0	51.0	90.6
		Tertiary Education	36	9.4	9.4	100.0
		Total	384	100.0	100.0	

The distributions of the respondents on the basis of the six (6) demographic variables and eight personal data items are analysed and presented as follows.

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

Results

Research Question one: What cause of *Boko Haram* is most Prevalent in Nigeria?

The Causes of *Boko Haram* Insurgency in Nigeria.

This section of the study analyses the opinions of the respondents on the causes of *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria with a view to unraveling the most predominant cause of *Boko Haram* insurgency. To do this, data that were obtained through questionnaire administration were analysed. Respondents were asked to strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree to five assertions made by the researcher on some of the causes of the *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria during the period. Each are presented in separate tables and analysed below.

Table 1.1. Unemployment is identified as one of the Causes of *Boko Haram* Insurgency in Nigeria

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
Strongly Disagree	40	10.4	10.4	10.4
Disagree	35	9.1	9.1	19.5
Agree	63	16.4	16.4	35.9
Strongly Agree	246	64.1	64.1	100.0
Total	384	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

The first assertion is that one of the causes of *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria is unemployment. Reacting to this, 40 respondents, representing 10% strongly disagreed and 35 respondents, representing 9.1% disagreed with the assertion that

unemployment is one of the causes of the *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria. Also, 63 respondents, representing 16.4% agreed and 246 respondents, constituting 64.1% strongly agreed that unemployment is one of the major causes of the *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria.

Table 1.2. The High Rate of Poverty in Northeastern Part of Nigeria Accounts for *Boko Haram* Insurgency in Nigeria.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
Strongly Disagree	2	.5	.5	.5
Disagree	4	1.0	1.0	1.6
Agree	44	11.5	11.5	13.0
Strongly Agree	334	87.0	87.0	100.0
Total	384	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

The second assertion is that the high rate of poverty in the North-eastern part of the country accounts for *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria. Reacting to this, 2 respondents, representing .5% strongly disagreed and 4 respondents, representing 1.0% disagreed with the assertion that the high rate of poverty in the northeastern part of Nigeria accounts for *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria. Also, 44 respondents, representing 11.5% agreed and 334 respondents, constituting 87.0% strongly agreed that the high rate of poverty in the northeastern part of Nigeria accounts for *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria.

Table 1.3. The Quest for Political Power is Also One of the Major Causes of *Boko Haram* Insurgency in Nigeria

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
Strongly Disagree	21	5.5	5.5	5.5
Disagree	9	2.3	2.3	7.8
Agree	82	21.4	21.4	29.2
Strongly Agree	272	70.8	70.8	100.0
Total	384	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

With regards to the third issue, reacting to this, 21 respondents, representing 5.5% strongly disagreed and 9 respondents, representing 2.3% disagreed with the assertion that the quest for political power is also one of the major causes of *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria. Also, 82 respondents, representing 21.4% agreed and 272

respondents, constituting 70.0% strongly agreed that the quest for political power is one of the causes of the *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria.

Table 1.4. Religious Fanatism can also be Ascribed as One of the Causes of *Boko Haram* Insurgency in Nigeria.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
Strongly Disagree	27	7.0	7.0	7.0
Disagree	15	3.9	3.9	10.9
Agree	65	16.9	16.9	27.9
Strongly Agree	277	72.1	72.1	100.0
Total	384	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

With respect to the fourth assertion, 27 respondents, representing 7.0% strongly disagreed and 15 respondents, representing 3.9% disagreed with the assertion that religious fanaticism can also be ascribed as one of the causes of *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria. Also, 65 respondents, representing 16.9% agreed and 277 respondents, constituting 72.1% strongly agreed that religious fanaticism can also be ascribed as one of the causes of *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria

Table 1.5. Lack of Education by Majority of the Youths in Northern Nigeria Can be attributed to the Cause of *Boko Haram* insurgency

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
Strongly Disagree	52	13.5	13.5	13.5
Disagree	25	6.5	6.5	20.1
Agree	49	12.8	12.8	32.8
Strongly Agree	258	67.2	67.2	100.0
Total	384	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

On the fifth assertion, 51 respondents, representing 13.5% strongly disagreed and 25 respondents, representing 6.5% disagreed with the assertion that lack of education by majority of the youths in Northern Nigeria can be attributed to the cause of *Boko Haram* insurgency. Also, 49 respondents, representing 12.8% agreed and 258 respondents, constituting 67.2% strongly agreed that lack of education by majority of the youths in Northern Nigeria can be attributed to the cause of *Boko Haram* insurgency.

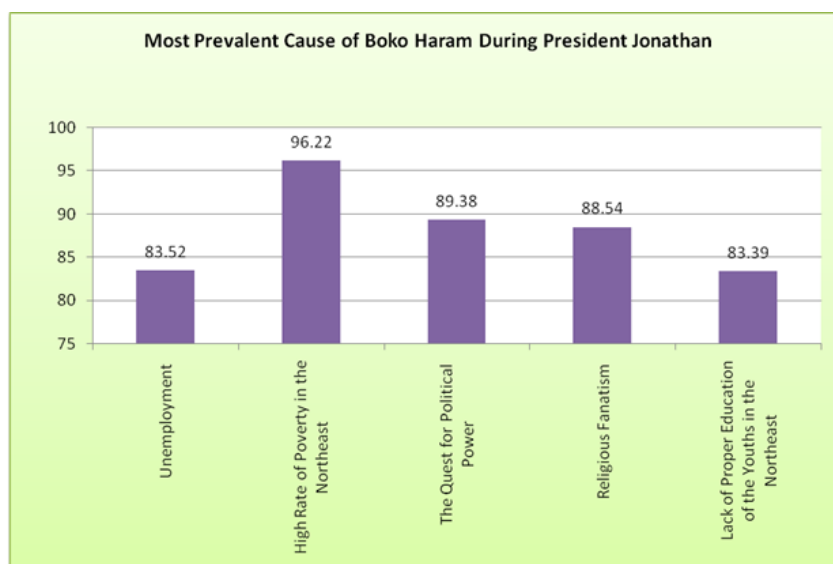


Figure 1: Most Prevalent cause of *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria.

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

The figure indicates that unemployment as one of the causes of *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria is 83.52% very high while, high rate of poverty in the Northeast is 96.22% very high. Also, the quest for political power has 89.38% is very high cause of *Boko Haram* insurgency in Northeast Nigeria. The figure further showed that religious fanaticism 88.54% is a very his cause of *Boko Haram* insurgency in Northeast Nigeria; and that lack of proper education of the youths in the Northeast 83.39% is a very high cause of *Boko Haram* insurgency in Northeast Nigeria. Summarily, results showed that the high rate of poverty 96.22% in the Northeast is the most prevalent cause of *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria.

Research Question Four: What Policy Measure Best Tackles Socio-Political Effects of the Insurgency?

Policy Measures to Tackle the Socio-Political Effects of the *Boko Haram* Insurgency

This section of the study analyses the opinion of the respondents on some policy measures that can be used to tackle the socio-political effects of the *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria. To do this, data obtained through questionnaire administration were analysed. Respondents were asked to strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree to five assertions made by the researcher on some policy measures that can

be used to tackle the socio-political effect of the insurgency. Each are presented in separate tables and analysed below.

Table 1.6. The Federal Government Should Dialogue with the *Boko Haram* Insurgents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
Strongly Disagree	36	9.4	9.4	9.4
Disagree	5	1.3	1.3	10.7
Agree	163	42.4	42.4	53.1
Strongly Agree	180	46.9	46.9	100.0
Total	384	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

The first assertion is that should the federal government of Nigeria dialogue with the *Boko Haram* insurgents. Reacting to this, 36 respondents, representing 9.4% strongly disagreed and 5 respondents, representing 1.3% disagreed with the assertion that the federal government of Nigeria dialogue with the *Boko Haram* insurgents. Also, 163 respondents, 42.4% agreed and 180 respondents, constituting 46.9% strongly agreed that the federal government should dialogue with the *Boko Haram* insurgents.

Table 1.7 Increased Military Operations will bring an end to the *Boko Haram* Insurgency

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
Strongly Disagree	13	3.4	3.4	3.4
Disagree	6	1.6	1.6	4.9
Agree	46	12.0	12.0	16.9
Strongly Agree	319	83.1	83.1	100.0
Total	384	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2016

The second assertion is that increased military operation will bring an end to the *Boko Haram* insurgency. As shown in table 1.7, 18 respondents, representing 3.4% strongly disagreed and 6 respondents, representing 12.0% agreed with the assertion increased military operation will bring an end to the *Boko Haram* insurgency, 319 respondents, representing 83.1% strongly agreed that increased military operation will bring an end to the *Boko Haram* insurgency. While some 3.2% of the respondents disagreed that increased military operation will bring an end to the insurgency.

Table 1.8. The Federal Government Should Consider Granting Amnesty to the *Boko Haram* Insurgents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
Strongly Disagree	17	4.4	4.4	4.4
Disagree	1	.3	.3	4.7
Agree	92	24.0	24.0	28.6
Strongly Agree	274	71.4	71.4	100.0
Total	384	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

With regards the third assertion that should the federal government of Nigeria considers granting amnesty to the *Boko Haram* insurgents, table 1.8 Shows that 17 respondents, representing 4.4% strongly disagreed, 1 respondent, representing .3% disagreed with the assertion that the federal government should consider granting amnesty to the *Boko Haram* insurgents. Against this background, 92 respondents, representing 24.0% agreed and 274% strongly agreed with the assertion that the federal government of Nigeria should consider granting amnesty to the *Boko Haram* insurgents.

Table 1.9. The Various Levels of Government Should Work to Rehabilitate Victims of the *Boko Haram* Insurgency

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0
Disagree	0	0	0	0
Agree	5	1.3	1.3	1.3
Strongly Agree	379	98.7	98.7	100.0
Total	384	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

On the fourth assertion, 5 respondents representing 1.3% agreed and 379 respondents, representing 98.7% strongly agreed that the various levels of government should work to rehabilitate the victims of the *Boko Haram* insurgency.

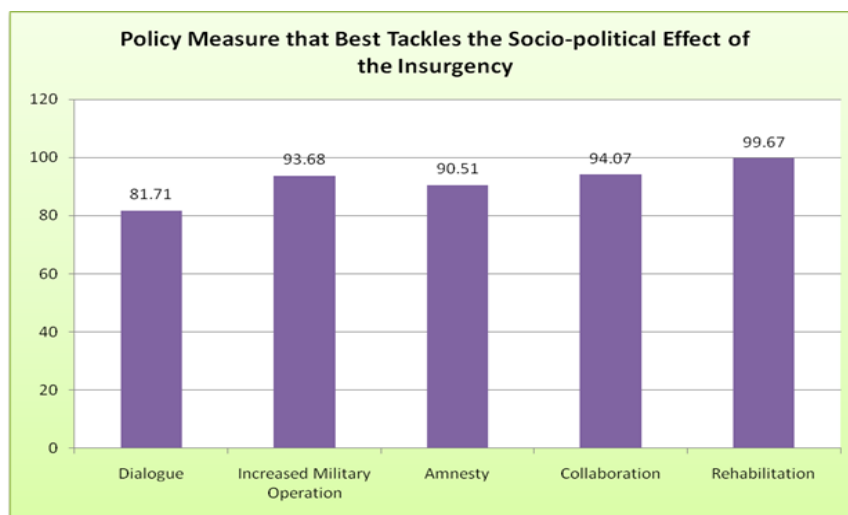


Figure 2. Measures to Tackle the Socio-Political Effects of the *Boko Haram* Insurgency

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

Results on the figure indicate that dialogue which had 81.7% has a very high potency to tackle the socio-political effect of the insurgency. Also, increased military operations 93.68% have a very high potency to tackle the socio-political effects of the *Boko Haram* insurgency in the Northeastern Nigeria. More so, amnesty 90.52% has a very high potency to tackle the socio-political effects of the *Boko Haram* insurgency in the Northeastern Nigeria. Likewise, result on the figure indicates that collaboration 94.07%; and rehabilitation 99.67% has very high potency respectively, as the best policy measure to tackle the socio-political effects of the *Boko Haram* insurgency in the Northeastern Nigeria. Summarily, results indicate that rehabilitation 99.67% is the best policy measure to tackle the socio-political effects of the *Boko Haram* insurgency. The second-best policy measure is collaboration 94.07%; and this is followed by increased military operations 93.68% in the Northeastern Nigeria.

Policy Recommendations

Finally, the study recommends that the best policy measure that can be used to tackle the socio-political effect of the *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria is the rehabilitation of internally displaced persons (IDPs). This is closely followed by collaboration by the local, state and federal government in making sure that all hands

are on deck to find a lasting solution to the insurgency, while increased military operation in the North-eastern part of Nigeria is also one of the policy measures that can be used to tackle the *Boko haram* insurgency in Nigeria. These findings were supported by the works of Itumoa & Nwobashi (2016). In the opinion of Itumoa & Nwobashi (2016) they recommended that the government should make more concerted efforts to provide the needs of the displaced persons by rehabilitating the socio-economic and psychological conditions of the IDPs.

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