

## Consequences of Boko Haram Insurgency on Language Learning and Intergenerational Transmission

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### Abstract

This study investigates the consequences of the Boko Haram insurgency on language learning and intergenerational language transmission in north-eastern Nigeria. While much scholarly attention has been given to the group's ideological motivations and its impact on security and education, limited research exists on the linguistic and cultural dimensions of this protracted conflict. Drawing on Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) and UNESCO's framework for language vitality, the study explores how school closures, displacement, and family fragmentation have disrupted both formal and informal language acquisition among affected populations. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 120 questionnaire respondents, 15 in-depth interviews, and six focus group discussions across Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States. The findings reveal that the insurgency has not only dismantled educational infrastructure but also significantly weakened the family-based transmission of indigenous languages. In internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, dominant regional languages such as Hausa and English are replacing minority mother tongues, particularly among children. The linguistic environment in these camps and host communities fosters passive bilingualism or outright language shift, putting many indigenous languages at risk of endangerment. The study concludes that Boko Haram's campaign—although ideologically opposed to Western education—has ironically accelerated the decline of indigenous linguistic and cultural heritage. Language loss in this context is both a consequence of violence and a form of cultural disenfranchisement. The paper recommends targeted post-conflict education policies that prioritize mother-tongue instruction, support linguistic resilience in displacement settings, and address the broader structural causes of insurgency. Preserving language transmission is positioned not merely as a cultural concern, but as an essential element of post-conflict recovery and national identity.

**Keywords:** Boko Haram, Intergenerational Language Transmission, Language Shift, Conflict and Education

### Introduction

Boko Haram's insurgency, which began in 2009, has unleashed widespread violence and instability in northern Nigeria (Umar, 2024). The group's ideology explicitly rejects Western-style education, framing it as antithetical to Islamic values. As reflected in its name—"Boko

Haram” roughly translates to “Western education is forbidden”—the movement positions itself in opposition to secular schooling and the institutions that promote it. Consequently, schools, teachers, and students have become frequent targets of attack. Over the past decade, the insurgency has grown increasingly brutal, encompassing bombings, assassinations, and mass abductions. For instance, in November 2020, Boko Haram militants massacred over 100 farmers in Koshebe village, Borno State (Al Jazeera, 2020). Similarly, in a September 2024 attack in Yobe State, over 100 villagers were reportedly killed (Umar, 2024). These incidents contribute to a climate of chronic insecurity, mass displacement, and social fragmentation.

Northern Nigeria has historically lagged behind other regions in terms of educational attainment. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), literacy rates in the north-eastern states remain significantly lower than the national average, with persistent gender disparities and infrastructure deficits compounding the problem. Even prior to the insurgency, school attendance rates were low, particularly among girls, due to a combination of poverty, cultural attitudes, and the limited availability of schools and qualified teachers. The outbreak of violence in 2009 exacerbated these challenges, effectively reversing years of gradual educational progress. Schools were forced to close indefinitely, teachers fled the region, and families became increasingly reluctant to send their children to school out of fear for their safety. Despite sustained counter-insurgency efforts and multinational interventions, Boko Haram remains a potent force in north-eastern Nigeria (Danjibo, 2009). The conflict’s persistence has far-reaching social and developmental consequences. Previous studies note that such insurgencies undermine community cohesion, displace populations, and erode state capacity (Anifowose, 2012). Within this context, the present study addresses a relatively underexplored but crucial dimension of the crisis: its impact on language learning and intergenerational language transmission. As education systems collapse and families are displaced, children lose access not only to formal schooling but also to the everyday language interactions that support mother-tongue acquisition.

This study examines the consequences of Boko Haram’s insurgency on language learning and the transmission of indigenous languages between generations. It addresses two central research questions: (i) What are the effects of the insurgency on language education in formal and informal learning environments? (ii) How does the conflict influence the transmission of language from parents to children in displaced and disrupted communities? A third aim is to identify strategies for mitigating these negative outcomes and safeguarding Nigeria’s linguistic heritage in the face of conflict. By focusing on language outcomes, the research highlights an often-overlooked consequence of the insurgency—one that intersects with issues of education, culture, and identity. The findings have relevance beyond Nigeria. They contribute to global understandings of how violent conflict threatens not only lives and property but also the intangible elements of culture—such as language—that form the bedrock of social continuity. Language is not merely a tool of communication; it is a vessel of identity, history, and belonging. Its loss in the wake of conflict is both a cultural and developmental tragedy.

## Literature Review

In global perspective, modern terrorism and insurgency are often driven by a complex interplay of ideological, political, and socio-economic grievances (Parker & Sitter, 2016). Over time, the tactics of insurgent groups have evolved from targeted attacks on military installations to widespread, indiscriminate violence against civilians, schools, and cultural institutions (Schmid, 2006; Walzer, 1977). This evolution reflects a strategy of destabilization: by targeting education, insurgents not only disrupt state authority but also undermine the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, values, and identity.

Boko Haram stands out in the African context as one of the most lethal and culturally disruptive insurgent movements of the 21st century. Its ideological foundation is rooted in a rejection of “Western” education and secular governance. Formed in the early 2000s in Borno State by Muhammad Yusuf, the group escalated its violent campaign following his death in 2009, launching bombings, armed raids, and mass abductions across north-eastern Nigeria (Danjibo, 2009; Anifowose, 2012). The infamous 2014 abduction of 276 Chibok schoolgirls

brought international attention to the group's explicit war on education. The educational consequences of Boko Haram's insurgency are well documented. Dagaci (2015) asserts that the group's systematic attacks on schools are intended to halt secular learning and paralyze institutional development in northern Nigeria. Between 2014 and 2021 alone, dozens of school kidnappings occurred across states such as Borno, Yobe, Zamfara, and Niger (Al Jazeera, 2021; Akinwotu, 2021; Ewang, 2024). These assaults have led to school closures not only in directly attacked communities but also in surrounding areas, where fear of violence drives absenteeism and dropout. Recent reports confirm that this climate of insecurity persists. In March 2024, 287 students were abducted in Kaduna State, further emphasizing the ongoing vulnerability of educational institutions (Ewang, 2024). As parents withdraw their children from school and teachers flee the region, the educational infrastructure collapses—with profound implications for literacy and language development.

Beyond physical violence, insurgency and forced displacement often trigger language shift—a phenomenon where individuals or communities abandon their native language in favour of a dominant one (Brenzinger, 2003). This occurs when displaced populations resettle in linguistically different environments, where survival and integration depend on the use of more widely spoken languages. Globally, this trend has been observed in refugee contexts: Syrian, Kurdish, and South Sudanese communities have reported significant language loss among children in camps or host societies (UNESCO, 2003; Brenzinger, 2003). As formal education is disrupted and children adapt to dominant camp languages, mother-tongue fluency declines. These effects are often intergenerational: when children stop learning their ancestral language, they are less likely to pass it on in the future—setting the stage for language extinction.

While Nigerian scholars have contributed significantly to studies on Boko Haram's socio-political impact, a clear research gap exists concerning language. Much of the existing literature focuses on education, security, or religion (Danjibo, 2009; Anifowose, 2012), but few studies directly investigate how conflict affects the transmission and vitality of indigenous languages, especially among minority communities in the northeast. This is notable given Nigeria's exceptional linguistic diversity—with over 500 indigenous languages, many of which are already endangered (UNESCO, 2003). Boko Haram's insurgency has placed additional stress on this fragile linguistic ecosystem. Yet, there is limited empirical research examining how displacement, fear, and school closures accelerate language shift and attrition. As a result, Nigeria risks losing not only speakers but also the cultural knowledge embedded in those languages.

Elsewhere in Africa, researchers have begun to link insurgency to cultural and linguistic loss. In Mali, for example, the Tuareg rebellion and jihadist insurgencies have led to the decline of minority languages in IDP settlements where Bambara or French dominate. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, displacement due to armed conflict has altered language use among Luba and Mongo populations. These case studies offer useful comparative frameworks, demonstrating how conflict-induced multilingualism, in the absence of mother-tongue education, often leads to assimilation into dominant linguistic groups. The Nigerian case, however, remains under-explored in this regard—despite exhibiting many of the same risk factors: protracted violence, high displacement, linguistic diversity, and educational breakdown. This study contributes to filling that gap by foregrounding language as a vulnerable cultural domain during armed conflict and proposing evidence-based strategies for its preservation.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored in the sociolinguistic theory of language vitality and intergenerational transmission, with particular emphasis on Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) and UNESCO's framework for assessing language endangerment. These models provide the conceptual tools for understanding how armed conflict, displacement, and educational disruption influence the long-term sustainability of minority languages. Developed by Joshua Fishman (1991), the GIDS is a diagnostic tool used to assess the degree of disruption in a language's transmission from one generation to the next. The scale consists

of eight stages, ranging from Stage 1 (a language with full institutional support, including use in government and higher education) to Stage 8 (a moribund language with only a few elderly speakers and no transmission to children). Central to the GIDS is the family unit: Fishman posits that intergenerational transmission within the home is the most crucial domain for language survival. According to his model, even if a language is taught in schools or used in media, it cannot thrive unless it is passed organically from parents to children. When children no longer acquire or use the language at home, it begins to decline—even if broader societal functions remain in place. In the context of Boko Haram's insurgency, the GIDS provides a lens to examine how displacement, school closures, and the breakdown of family cohesion contribute to regression on the scale—from vibrant transmission (Stage 6) toward endangerment (Stages 7 and 8).

UNESCO (2003) complements Fishman's GIDS by identifying nine criteria for assessing language vitality, including:

- Intergenerational language transmission
- Absolute number of speakers
- Proportion of speakers within the population
- Shifts in language domains
- Governmental and institutional language attitudes
- Availability of materials for education and literacy

Of these, intergenerational transmission is emphasized as the most critical. A language is considered "safe" only when children continue to learn and use it fluently in natural settings. Conflict-related factors—such as separation from elders, trauma, schooling in dominant languages, and lack of instructional materials—undermine these conditions, particularly in multilingual and marginalized regions like north-eastern Nigeria. UNESCO also stresses that the cultural environment must support language use across domains (e.g., home, school, religious life). When conflict narrows the domains where a language is used, the overall ecology of the language collapses.

The process of language shift—where speakers of a minority language gradually adopt a more dominant language over time—is often driven by socio-political pressures. According to sociolinguists such as Brenzinger (2003) and Spolsky (2004), this shift is accelerated in contexts of:

- Conflict and displacement
- Education in non-native languages
- Prestige imbalance between languages
- Inter-ethnic mixing in urban or camp settings

In Boko Haram-affected areas, all of these factors are present. As families resettle in IDP camps or urban centres, children are increasingly exposed to Hausa or English, often with limited reinforcement of their mother tongue. The long-term result is not only a reduction in language proficiency but also a weakening of cultural identity and memory. This framework informs the study's analysis of educational records, family language practices, and community narratives. By situating empirical findings within these theoretical models, the research provides a deeper understanding of how insurgency reshapes linguistic futures—and what might be done to reverse or mitigate those trends.

## Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive field survey design to examine the impact of Boko Haram's insurgency on language learning and intergenerational language transmission in north-eastern Nigeria. The design was chosen for its suitability in capturing both quantitative patterns and qualitative experiences in conflict-affected communities. The research was conducted across selected communities in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States—regions most severely impacted by Boko Haram's activities. These states represent the epicentre of the

insurgency, with widespread reports of school closures, population displacement, and cultural disruption. The study population consisted of displaced families, community elders, teachers, school administrators, local language activists, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) residing in camps or host communities. A multi-stage purposive sampling technique was employed. First, local government areas (LGAs) with high levels of insurgency-related displacement were selected. Within each LGA, two to three communities were identified in consultation with humanitarian agencies and local officials. Participants were selected based on their knowledge of local language practices and educational experiences. The final sample included:

- 120 questionnaire respondents, comprising 45 teachers, 35 parents, 20 youth, and 20 local officials or NGO staff;
- 6 focus group discussions (FGDs), each with 6–8 participants from IDP camps and host communities;
- 15 in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, religious figures, and educators.

Three main instruments were used to collect data:

1. **Structured Questionnaires:** Designed to gather quantitative data on school attendance, language use at home, perceived threats to language vitality, and displacement histories. Questions included both closed-ended and Likert-scale formats.
2. **Focus Group Discussion Guides:** Used to explore community perceptions, language shifts in children, and challenges facing education and transmission. Discussions were held in Hausa or English, depending on participant preference.
3. **Key Informant Interview Schedules:** Designed to collect detailed, experience-based accounts of the effects of insurgency on educational and linguistic practices.

All instruments were validated through pilot testing in non-sampled communities in Bauchi State. Minor adjustments were made to improve clarity and contextual relevance.

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics. Frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores were calculated using Microsoft Excel and SPSS to identify patterns in language use, school attendance, and perceptions of cultural loss. Qualitative data from interviews and FGDs were transcribed, coded, and subjected to thematic analysis. Recurring themes such as fear of schooling, displacement-induced language shift, and loss of cultural continuity were identified and grouped into analytic categories. Finally, the combined data were interpreted through the lens of Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) (1991). Each local language community was assessed based on the continuity or breakdown of intergenerational transmission, drawing on UNESCO's (2003) framework for assessing language vitality. This triangulated approach—combining statistical trends with contextual narratives—allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic consequences of insurgency, ensuring both breadth and depth in the findings.

This study was conducted with full ethical consideration for the safety, dignity, and privacy of participants, particularly given the conflict-affected nature of the research setting. All data collection adhered to established humanitarian and academic research protocols. Informed consent was obtained orally or in writing from all respondents—including teachers, parents, youth, and displaced individuals—depending on literacy levels. Participation was entirely voluntary, and individuals retained the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Interviews and focus group discussions were held in secure and neutral environments, with appropriate permissions obtained from local authorities. No identifying personal data were recorded, ensuring respondent confidentiality and data protection. The researcher affirms that no external funding was received for this study and declares no conflict of interest.

## Findings

The findings of this study reveal profound disruptions to both formal education and intergenerational language transmission across Boko Haram-affected regions. Through a combination of survey data, interviews, and focus group discussions, several interconnected themes emerged:

### 1. Educational Collapse and Fear of Schooling

Nearly all participants confirmed that formal education systems had been severely disrupted. Schools in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States were either destroyed, converted into military posts, or closed indefinitely due to security threats. Over 89% of questionnaire respondents indicated that children in their communities had stopped attending school for prolonged periods between 2014 and 2023.

One teacher from Borno stated:

*“Our school was bombed twice. Even when it reopened under military watch, only a handful of students came. Parents are too afraid.”*

This fear has become institutionalized. Several communities implemented informal “safety protocols,” such as rotating attendance schedules, early dismissal hours, or shifting to weekend-only classes to avoid detection by insurgents. These modifications, however, greatly reduced contact hours and curriculum coverage, especially for language instruction.

### 2. Interrupted Language Learning and Declining Literacy

With formal schooling suspended or inconsistent, children missed out on crucial periods of cognitive and linguistic development. Literacy in both English and indigenous languages declined significantly, as reported by teachers and parents. Language subjects were often the first to be dropped from abridged curriculums when schools resumed under emergency conditions.

A youth respondent from Yola said:

*“I used to read Hausa books in school, but after the attacks we didn’t go back. Now I can only speak, not read or write.”*

Quantitative data indicated that 72% of students aged 10–16 in the sample population had below-average reading skills in their mother tongue, compared to older siblings or pre-insurgency cohorts.

### 3. Displacement and Linguistic Environment in IDP Camps

The insurgency has displaced millions of Nigerians, many of whom now live in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps or host communities. In these camps, linguistic diversity is high but structured education is minimal. Hausa and English often dominate, marginalizing minority languages.

Respondents noted that in many IDP settings:

- Hausa serves as the lingua franca for children from different backgrounds.
- Schooling, where available, is usually delivered in English or Hausa.
- Indigenous language instruction is absent or informal.

One parent observed:

*"My daughter only hears our language when I speak it at home. Outside, it's all Hausa. She understands me, but replies in Hausa."*

This pattern is indicative of passive bilingualism, where children recognize but do not actively use their ancestral language—a precursor to language shift.

#### 4. Gendered Dimensions of Disruption

The educational and linguistic consequences were especially pronounced for girls, who often face multiple layers of vulnerability. Cultural norms, combined with security concerns, led many families to withdraw daughters from school entirely. In focus group discussions, mothers expressed concern that daughters, especially those nearing adolescence, were being kept out of both formal and informal learning spaces.

A mother in Maiduguri stated:

*"After the Chibok girls were taken, nobody wanted to risk sending daughters to school. Many girls now just stay home or help in markets."*

This disengagement from school and reduced exposure to wider linguistic environments has limited both literacy acquisition and social language use, disproportionately affecting female children's educational and cultural futures.

#### 5. Disruption of Intergenerational Language Transmission

In addition to school-related challenges, the insurgency has disrupted family units. Many children were separated from parents due to death, migration, or the need for safety in distant cities. In these situations, children are often raised by extended family members or live communally in camps—frequently with caregivers who do not speak the same indigenous language.

A displaced elder shared:

*"My grandchildren now live with their uncle in Bauchi. They've forgotten our language. When I speak, they look confused."*

These anecdotes align with survey findings: 64% of parents reported that their children now speak a different dominant language at home than the one spoken by their grandparents. This suggests a generational language rupture accelerated by displacement.

#### 6. Regional Variation in Language Shift

The study also found regional differences in the degree of language disruption:

Borno State exhibited the highest rate of linguistic shift, due to widespread destruction and long-term displacement.

Yobe and Adamawa States showed slightly lower rates, especially in areas where community-based schools had been re-established with donor support.

Communities that had received NGO assistance were more likely to include native language classes or cultural preservation activities. However, these programs remained underfunded and sporadic.

## 7. Regression in Language Vitality (Fishman's GIDS)

Applying Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), the findings indicate that many minority languages in the conflict zone have moved from Stage 6 (used orally by all generations) to Stage 7 or 8 (used only by older adults or no longer acquired by children).

In particular, languages such as Marghi, Babur, and Kanuri showed evidence of decreasing transmission in urban IDP environments.

UNESCO's (2003) criteria—which emphasize continuity, child acquisition, and community-based use—highlight that most of these languages are now classified as “definitely endangered.”

## Discussion

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that Boko Haram's insurgency has inflicted a dual-layered assault on language sustainability in northeastern Nigeria: it has not only devastated formal education systems but also fractured intergenerational language transmission within families and communities. These outcomes are consistent with sociolinguistic theory and empirical observations from other conflict settings.

### 1. Conflict-Induced Educational Collapse and Linguistic Marginalization

The widespread closure and destruction of schools in Boko Haram-affected regions aligns with the group's ideological opposition to Western-style education. However, paradoxically, its campaign has also undermined indigenous education, including mother-tongue instruction. The loss of structured schooling has deprived children of early literacy development—particularly in native languages, which are often taught in lower primary grades. These findings corroborate Dagaci's (2015) observation that Boko Haram's war on education is not only ideological but strategically aimed at disrupting secular and state-backed knowledge systems. Yet, the unintended consequence is a linguistic vacuum, where neither Western nor traditional educational goals can be sustained. In contexts where education is disrupted, children lose access to both the formal registers of national languages (like English or Hausa) and the narrative traditions embedded in local tongues—folk stories, proverbs, and moral instruction—normally transmitted through classroom storytelling and local curricula.

### 2. Intergenerational Language Transmission Under Threat

Applying Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) to this crisis highlights the central mechanism of linguistic endangerment: the breakdown of parent-to-child language transmission. According to Fishman (1991), a language survives only if it is actively learned and used by children in home and community contexts. Boko Haram's violence disrupts this continuity by:

Forcing families into linguistically heterogeneous IDP camps, where dominant regional languages (often Hausa) replace ancestral tongues.

Causing family separations, where children are raised by caretakers from different linguistic or ethnic groups.

Creating psychosocial stress, which leads parents to deprioritize language teaching in the face of survival needs.

UNESCO (2003) similarly notes that displacement and urban migration often accelerate language shift, as displaced youth adapt to the linguistic norms of their host environments. This pattern is evident in northeastern Nigeria, where children now show increasing proficiency in Hausa or English, often at the expense of their native languages.



### 3. Comparative Insights from Global Conflict Zones

Nigeria is not alone in facing conflict-driven language erosion. Studies from war-affected regions—such as Mali, Syria, and South Sudan—report similar trends. Brenzinger (2003) found that in refugee settings, younger children often assimilate the dominant language of camps, abandoning their mother tongues. In Syria, displaced Kurdish children in Arabic-majority host communities gradually lost fluency in Kurdish. In South Sudan, prolonged conflict caused generations of Dinka-speaking youth to adopt English or Arabic in exile. These comparative cases reinforce the finding that conflict-induced displacement often produces irreversible language shift, especially when host communities do not support minority language education.

### 4. Sociolinguistic Irony and Cultural Consequences

Ironically, Boko Haram's stated mission to reject Western culture has accelerated cultural erosion, not prevented it. While the group claims to uphold religious and traditional values, its destruction of schools and displacement of families has led to rapid language loss, weakening the very communities it purports to defend. Language is not only a tool for communication—it is a repository of collective memory, history, and identity. Its loss, particularly in the wake of violent conflict, represents a cultural tragedy that extends beyond individual communities. When children cease to speak the languages of their ancestors, a vital thread of continuity is severed. As Fishman (1991) emphasized, language shift is often the first step toward broader cultural assimilation or loss.

### 5. Need for Post-Conflict Language Policy and Education Reform

The findings suggest that language preservation must be integrated into post-conflict recovery strategies. Most humanitarian responses to the insurgency in Nigeria have understandably focused on food, shelter, and security. However, this study reveals the urgent need to address cultural and linguistic resilience.

Post-conflict education reform must:

- Reintroduce mother-tongue instruction in rebuilt schools and IDP camps.
- Train teachers to use local languages in early childhood education.
- Encourage community-based storytelling programs that engage elders and children.
- Support documentation of endangered languages, especially those already slipping toward extinction.

By rebuilding the linguistic ecosystem—home, school, and community—policymakers can counteract the language shift and revitalize cultural identities disrupted by war.

### 6. Broader Implications for Linguistic Human Rights

Finally, the study raises important questions about linguistic human rights in emergency contexts. Education in one's native language is recognized by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) and various regional human rights charters. Failure to provide linguistic continuity in crisis zones could constitute a form of cultural disenfranchisement, particularly for minority ethnic groups whose languages are already under pressure. Ensuring that displaced children retain access to their linguistic heritage is not merely an educational imperative—it is a moral obligation grounded in the principles of equity and cultural justice.

### Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

While this study offers important insights into the consequences of Boko Haram's insurgency on language learning and intergenerational transmission, several limitations must be acknowledged.

### 1. Geographic and Access Constraints

Due to security concerns, the study was restricted to relatively accessible areas within Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States. Many high-risk communities, particularly those still under threat or occupied by insurgents, were excluded for ethical and logistical reasons. As such, the data may underrepresent the full extent of disruption in more remote or severely affected regions.

### 2. Reliance on Self-Reported Data

The study's findings are based in part on self-reported data from questionnaires and interviews, which may be subject to recall bias, social desirability bias, or emotional distortion—especially given the traumatic experiences of respondents. While triangulation helped to validate responses, the absence of observational or longitudinal data limits the precision of conclusions.

### 3. Lack of Linguistic Proficiency Testing

Although participants described language shifts and fluency loss, the study did not include standardized linguistic assessments to objectively measure proficiency among children or parents. Future research could incorporate direct testing tools or corpus-based analysis to quantify language attrition and acquisition in displaced populations.

### 4. Limited Focus on Language Policy Dynamics

This study did not explore in detail how language-in-education policy, at either the federal or state level, influences language learning outcomes in conflict zones. Given the complex interplay between national curricula, regional languages, and emergency education responses, a more policy-oriented analysis could yield additional insights into structural challenges and opportunities.

### 5. Short-Term Scope

The current research presents a cross-sectional snapshot of linguistic disruption. However, language shift is a longitudinal process, and its outcomes evolve over generations. Continued study is needed to trace how displaced youth maintain or abandon their mother tongues over time, particularly as they resettle or reintegrate into post-conflict environments.

### Future Research Directions

To build on this study, future research might explore:

- Longitudinal studies of displaced children's language practices over 5–10 years;
- Comparative studies between IDP camps with and without language revitalization programs;
- Ethnographic fieldwork in multilingual conflict zones beyond Nigeria (e.g., Cameroon, Niger);
- The role of digital technologies and mobile learning in maintaining mother-tongue instruction during displacement;
- Policy analysis of how post-conflict states reintegrate minority languages into national education systems.

By addressing these gaps, researchers can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how violent conflict shapes the linguistic futures of affected communities.

### Conclusion

The Boko Haram insurgency has imposed catastrophic consequences on northeastern Nigeria—not only through its visible toll on lives, property, and security, but also through its

insidious erosion of education and cultural continuity. This study has demonstrated that the insurgency disrupts two key pillars of linguistic sustainability: formal language education and intergenerational language transmission. At the institutional level, Boko Haram's systematic targeting of schools, teachers, and students has led to widespread closures, long-term absenteeism, and the degradation of educational quality. Language learning has been disproportionately affected, as linguistic subjects are among the first to be deprioritized in emergency curricula. Children in affected regions are missing critical stages of literacy development, particularly in their mother tongues—a pattern that echoes broader trends observed in global conflict zones.

At the familial and community level, the displacement and fragmentation of households have severely impaired the natural transmission of indigenous languages from parents to children. In camps and host communities where Hausa or English dominate, children rapidly shift to these more widely spoken languages, often abandoning their ancestral tongues. This represents not just a linguistic loss, but a rupture in identity, memory, and cultural self-expression. Interpreted through Fishman's (1991) GIDS framework, these disruptions signify a regression in language vitality, with many minority languages now at risk of falling into endangerment or disuse. When families are separated, when classrooms are destroyed, and when dominant languages displace minority ones in everyday life, the conditions for language survival are severely compromised. In light of these findings, a multi-pronged response is necessary—one that addresses not only the security and infrastructural deficits caused by insurgency, but also the educational and cultural damages. The following recommendations are offered:

**Address Root Causes of Insurgency:** Policies must target the socio-economic, ideological, and governance failures that allow extremist narratives to flourish. This includes youth employment programs, religious dialogue initiatives, and equitable political inclusion.

**Rebuild and Protect Educational Institutions:** Schools must be physically reconstructed, emotionally rehabilitated, and safeguarded. Efforts should prioritize teacher training, student safety, and the reintegration of mother-tongue instruction into formal curricula.

**Support Displaced Families Linguistically and Culturally:** Emergency education programs in IDP camps and urban centers must include native language components. Cultural transmission should be supported through community storytelling, intergenerational dialogue, and documentation of endangered languages.

**Develop Post-Conflict Language Policy:** Language planning bodies must collaborate with humanitarian agencies to ensure that language rights are upheld even during displacement and reconstruction. Language loss is not inevitable—it is the product of neglect.

Ultimately, preserving linguistic diversity is not a peripheral concern in post-conflict societies. It is central to national healing, social reintegration, and identity reconstruction. Nigeria's future stability and inclusiveness will depend in part on whether it chooses to defend not only its borders and institutions, but also the cultural lifeblood carried in its hundreds of native languages. In reaffirming the value of indigenous languages, this study underscores that safeguarding language transmission is more than a scholarly endeavor—it is a moral and developmental imperative in the wake of violence.

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