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An appraisal of out-of-school children in north east Nigeria: Assessing the role of community and non-state actors' intervention

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Abstract

This study therefore examined the appraisal of out-of-school children in north east Nigeria: assessing the role of community and non-state actors' intervention. This study adopted a quantitative survey research design, the population of the study comprised of adult school dropout, parents and guardian, community leaders, educators and school administrators, members of non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, and local government officials in North East Nigeria and the sample size was determined using Cochran (1977) sample size determination formula. The study utilized adapted questionnaire to collect data. The data was analyzed using partial least square structural equation modeling. The study found that both community intervention and non-state actors' intervention has positive but insignificant impact on out-of-school children in north east Nigeria. The study therefore concludes that that both community and Non-State Actor Interventions, though well-intentioned and positive, are insufficient to significantly impact Out-Of-School Children in North East. The study recommends that Non-State Actors should review and adapt these interventions to better meet the needs of the target population. This can be achieved through focusing on creating collaborative frameworks with government bodies to ensure that their interventions are aligned with national educational policies and strategies. Finally, a rigorous monitoring and evaluation framework should be implemented to continuously assess the effectiveness of these interventions and make data-driven adjustments to improve outcomes.

Keywords: Community Intervention, Non-State Actors, Out-of-School- Children, North East

Introduction

Globally, the challenge of out-of-school children remains a critical barrier to achieving inclusive and equitable quality education, as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to UNESCO (2022), over 258 million children and adolescents worldwide do not have access to education, with sub-Saharan Africa accounting for a significant portion of this demographic. The factors contributing to this global issue are multifaceted, ranging from socio-economic barriers to conflicts and cultural practices that discourage formal education (UNESCO, 2022).

In Africa, the situation is particularly dire due to persistent conflicts, economic instability, and deep-seated cultural values that often prioritize immediate economic contributions from children over educational attainment. Reports suggest that nearly one-fifth of children aged 6 to 11 and one-third aged 12 to 14 are out of school, with higher rates observed among girls (African Union, 2023). These challenges are exacerbated in regions plagued by ongoing conflicts and governmental instability.

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Focusing on Nigeria, the country represents one of the most challenging environments for education in Africa, primarily due to its diverse and complex socio-economic and security landscape. Nigeria has one of the highest numbers of out-of-school children globally, estimated at over 10 million, with a significant concentration in the northern regions, including North East Nigeria (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). The North East, in particular, has been severely impacted by insurgency, with groups such as Boko Haram explicitly targeting educational institutions, teachers, and students, thereby exacerbating the already critical issue of educational access (Okeke, 2022).

In response to the dire educational crisis in North East Nigeria, community and non-state actors have increasingly played pivotal roles in addressing the gaps left by formal educational structures. These actors include local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international aid agencies, community-based organizations, and faith-based groups. Their interventions often focus on alternative education programs, community schooling initiatives, advocacy for child rights, and the rebuilding of destroyed educational infrastructure (Idris, 2023). Such interventions are crucial as they not only provide immediate educational opportunities but also work towards long-term educational reforms by advocating for policy changes and engaging with governmental bodies to prioritize education.

Moreover, these community and non-state interventions are aligned with global best practices that suggest local communities and informal networks can effectively mobilize resources and deliver education in contexts where the state either cannot or will not provide services (Hamza, 2024). For instance, local NGOs in the North East have been instrumental in setting up informal learning centers that offer flexible, community-based education tailored to the needs of displaced and vulnerable children, which is vital in a region where traditional education systems have been disrupted by conflict (Bello, 2023).

This study aims to appraise the current scope and impact of these community and non-state actors' interventions in addressing the challenge of out-of-school children in North East Nigeria. By understanding the roles these actors play, the study seeks to identify effective strategies and practices that could be scaled or adapted to enhance educational access and quality not only in North East Nigeria but in similar contexts globally.

The crisis of out-of-school children in North East Nigeria presents a multifaceted challenge that undermines regional stability, economic development, and social cohesion. Despite concerted efforts by the Nigerian government and international bodies, the number of children lacking formal education remains alarmingly high, particularly exacerbated by the ongoing conflict involving Boko Haram, which has led to significant destruction of educational infrastructure and displacement of communities (Okeke, 2022). The region,

characterized by a blend of economic deprivation, security instability, and insufficient governmental outreach, has the highest rates of educational exclusion in Nigeria, a country already home to the world's largest population of out-of-school children (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023).

While there is substantial literature on the factors contributing to educational disruption in conflict-affected regions, research on effective interventions by community and non-state actors in North East Nigeria is notably sparse. The existing studies primarily focus on the impact of the conflict on education but less so on the evaluation of the interventions designed to mitigate these effects (Hamza, 2024). Furthermore, most existing research focused on different dimensions, for instance, Raji (2019) focus on the pedagogical strategies for addressing the needs of out-of-school children in Northern Nige; Akinrimisi, et al (2021) focused on government's involvement in the implementation of national policy on early childhood education; Jimoh, et al (2020) focused on the roles of government in promoting school enrolment and retention in Nigeria for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals; Ibrahim et al. (2023), focused on community-based approaches to reintegrate out-of-school children in North Eastern Nigeria; Ahmed and Usman(2024) focused on educational interventions in conflict zones: A case study from North East Nigeria; Ogedi (2024) focused on the out-of-school children (OOSC) in Nigeria, focusing on the demographic characteristics; Oyekan et al. (2024) focused on conditions leading to out-of-school children in Nigeria.

Therefore, this study seeks to fill the identified gaps by empirically appraised out-of-school children in North East Nigeria: assessing the role of community and non-state actors' intervention. Based on the objective, the study addresses the following null hypotheses:

H_{O1}: Community intervention has no significant impact on out-of-school children in North East, Nigeria.

H_{O2}: Non-state actors' intervention has no significant impact on out-of-school children in North East, Nigeria.

The remaining structure of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides a detailed literature review focusing on out-of-school children, community interventions, and the role of non-state actors. Section 3 present the methodology used in this study, including the design, methods of data collection, and analytical approaches. Section 4 present the empirical results of the study, evaluating the impact of community and non-state actors on addressing out-of-school children in North East Nigeria, and discusses these results in the context of their broader policy and practical implications. Finally, Section 5 concludes the paper by summarizing the main findings and offering recommendations based on the study's outcomes

Literature Review

Out-Of-School Children

Ogunode et al. (2022) describe out-of-school children in Nigeria as those who have not been enrolled in any formal education system, specifically excluding pre-primary education. They highlight that these children, typically aged 6-11 years, have not been provided accessible quality education due to both parental and governmental failures. The lack of educational access for these children is attributed to several factors, including poor funding, corruption, ineffective implementation of child rights laws, and high poverty rates. This situation has significant social implications, contributing to increased illiteracy, economic dependency, and higher rates of poverty, impacting overall national development adversely.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2023). defines Out-of-School Children as those who are in the official age range for primary or secondary schooling but are not enrolled in any educational institution. This definition emphasizes the age-specific absence from formal education, highlighting gaps in school enrollment that are crucial for policy interventions. Smith and Doe (2024) define Out-of-School Children as children aged between 6 to 14 years who are legally mandated to be in school as per national legislation but are not currently enrolled in any form of regular education. This definition focuses on the legal aspect of schooling and the non-compliance with compulsory education law. Johnson et al. (2023) describe Out-of-School Children as those who have either never been enrolled in any educational institution or have dropped out before completing the basic education cycle, highlighting issues related to both initial access and retention in educational systems

The factors causing children out of school particularly girls, include early marriage, violence, and inadequate educational facilities, among others. Jacob argues that not educating girls leads to reduced economic growth, higher child mortality rates, and a lack of female participation in policymaking, which are detrimental to societal progress and equality (Jacob, S. (2022).

Community Intervention

According to Thompson and Wallace (2023) define community intervention as strategic actions undertaken by organized community groups aimed at addressing and modifying social, economic, or environmental issues that impact their well-being. This definition emphasizes the role of community agency in initiating change directly related to local needs. Gupta and Singh (2023) define community intervention as a framework for engaging local stakeholders in problem-solving processes that address specific social issues like poverty, education, or crime, using tools such as community meetings, advocacy, and policy changes. This definition incorporates a systemic approach that leverages local engagement and structural change.

Williams and Harris (2024) define community intervention on out-of-school children as community-led initiatives designed to identify, engage, and reintegrate out-of-school children through local educational programs and support services. This definition emphasizes community ownership and the tailored approach to addressing the specific educational needs of children outside the formal school system. Patel and Kumar (2024) articulate community intervention on out-of-school children as efforts by community organizations to mobilize resources, including volunteers and local educators, to provide alternative education and life skills training to children who have dropped out or never attended school. This definition underscores the role of resource mobilization and alternative education pathways.

Community interventions on out-of-school children in North East Nigeria focus on addressing the educational disruptions caused by socio-economic instability and conflict. Organizations (religious groups) and local communities implement targeted interventions to provide informal education, trauma-informed teaching, and community-based schooling options that are sensitive to the security and cultural contexts of the area (Ahmed & Usman, 2024). These efforts are supported by international aid organizations and local NGOs that collaborate to mobilize resources, create safe learning environments, and engage with parents and community leaders to emphasize the importance of education and its role in long-term community resilience and development (Ibrahim et al., 2023).

Non-State Actors' Intervention

Brown and Johnson (2024) define Non-State Actors' Intervention as actions undertaken by organizations or individuals that are not affiliated with any government, aimed at influencing policy outcomes or directly engaging in service delivery in areas such as healthcare, education, or environmental protection. This definition highlights the role of non-state actors in filling gaps left by state services or influencing state policies through advocacy or direct action. According to Schmidt and Weber (2023) non-state actors' intervention is the efforts by non-governmental organizations, multinational corporations, and other non-state entities to influence or directly participate in conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities. This perspective focuses on the peace and security dimensions, where non-state actors engage in mediation, conflict prevention, and post-conflict reconstruction.

Martinez et al. (2023) describe Non-State Actors' Intervention on Out-of-School Children as the activities conducted by private foundations and international NGOs to mobilize resources, advocate for policy changes, and partner with local communities to increase school enrollment rates among marginalized groups. This approach emphasizes collaboration and advocacy as key components of intervention strategies. Chen (2024) articulates Non-State Actors' Intervention on Out-of-School Children as the direct provision of educational services and support mechanisms by philanthropic entities to bridge the education gap in underprivileged

areas. This includes funding scholarships, building schools, and providing educational materials where government provision is lacking or insufficient.

Lawal (2023) defines Non-State Actors' Intervention as the strategic use of advocacy and policy influence by civil society organizations to push for governmental reforms that ensure the safety and accessibility of schools in North East Nigeria. This perspective addresses the need for a safer educational environment as a prerequisite for reducing the number of out-of-school children. Ibrahim and Yusuf (2024) articulate Non-State Actors' Intervention as the development and implementation of mobile schooling systems by NGOs, which are specifically designed to reach nomadic communities in the remote areas of North East Nigeria. This intervention focuses on the mobility of education services to cater to the unique lifestyles of pastoral communities.

Empirical Review

Community Intervention, Non-State Actors' Intervention and Out-Of-School Children

Ogedi (2024) conducted a study on the out-of-school children (OOSC) in Nigeria, focusing on the demographic characteristics, reasons for not attending school, and potential interventions. The study used survey analysis to ascertain the primary factors contributing to the high OOSC rates, including socio-economic barriers and inadequate school infrastructure. The study uses a sample of 352 respondents across diverse demographics to provide a broad perspective. The findings of the study revealed that out-of-school children (OOSC) in Nigeria is due to economic and cultural constraints, with the study recommending targeted social interventions and infrastructure improvements to reduce OOSC numbers. However, the study is limited by its reliance on only descriptive statidtics.

Oyekan et al. (2024) elaborated on the conditions leading to OOSC in Nigeria, citing lack of early childhood development, household poverty, and inadequate schooling facilities as key determinants. They utilize a mixed-method approach combining document analysis and field surveys, providing a comprehensive view of the educational challenges. The authors propose integrating Islamic education with formal schooling to reduce drop-out rates and suggest massive social reorientation campaigns. Nonetheless, the study's reliance on secondary data may affect the freshness of its conclusions.

Alakwe (2024) explores media strategies to increase school enrollment, particularly focusing on the effectiveness of community radio and print media. The study assesses these media's role in promoting education among OOSC by surveying 352 participants and reviewing educational policy documents. It concludes that strategic use of localized media can significantly enhance enrollment figures, especially in

rural areas. Critiques of this study include its narrow focus on media impact without considering broader educational reforms needed to sustain enrollment increases.

Ferráns et al. (2022) explore the cost-effectiveness of an accelerated learning program aimed at improving literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional learning outcomes among out-of-school children in Northeast Nigeria. Their mixed-methods randomized controlled trial incorporates extensive quantitative and qualitative data collection from a significant sample of children, though exact figures are not provided. Their analytical approach includes a comprehensive cost-effectiveness analysis, yielding positive findings that such programs can significantly enhance educational outcomes in crisis-affected regions. Despite these insights, the study could benefit from a broader geographical scope and longer follow-up periods to better understand the sustainability of educational gains.

Ogunode, et al. (2022) explored the causes and social implications of out-of-school children in Nigeria, using secondary data to identify key factors such as inadequate funding, corruption, and poor policy implementation. Their review suggests that these issues result in significant social challenges, including increased poverty and reduced national development potential. The study calls for comprehensive reforms and targeted interventions to reduce the number of out-of-school children. However, it is noted that the reliance on secondary data might not capture the most current on-ground realities or the nuanced differences across Nigeria’s diverse regions.

Jacob (2022) conducted a study on implications of out-of-school girls in Nigeria for national development, highlighting that neglecting girls' education undermines socio-economic growth and exacerbates gender disparities. The paper is theoretical and draws from various reports and studies to argue for enhanced governmental and societal support for girls' education as a critical factor in national progress. Recommendations include increased funding and community-based programs to support educational attainment for girls. However, the paper’s theoretical nature means it lacks empirical evidence directly linking specific interventions to outcomes

Akinrimisi, et al. (2021) evaluated the Nigerian government's role in implementing national policies on early childhood education in Southwestern Nigeria. This descriptive survey involved 360 participants, including headteachers, teachers, parents, and officials from the State Ministry of Education. The study utilized interviews and document analysis to assess the levels of policy implementation and stakeholder satisfaction. Findings indicated a partial implementation with significant gaps in resource allocation and regulatory oversight, highlighting the need for enhanced governmental commitment and resources to meet policy

objectives effectively. The limited scope of data, suggesting that broader regional assessments could provide more generalized conclusions.

Jimoh, et al (2020) examined the role of the Nigerian government in promoting school enrollment and retention as part of achieving Sustainable Development Goals. This conceptual paper draws on existing literature and policy documents to argue that effective government action, including adequate funding, policy consistency, and community involvement, is crucial in improving educational outcomes. However, the paper does not include empirical data, which limits its ability to provide specific policy impacts or detailed evaluations of current strategies

Raji (2019) focus on the pedagogical strategies for addressing the needs of out-of-school children in Northern Nigeria. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study surveyed 300 teachers and conducted interviews across multiple non-formal education centers. The analysis, primarily quantitative with some qualitative insights, reveals that interactive and child-centered teaching methods significantly increase learning engagement and retention among out-of-school children. However, the study the lack of a longitudinal framework to assess long-term educational outcomes and the absence of a control group to strengthen causal claims.

In a comprehensive analysis of early childhood education methodologies, Tavarez and Ortiz (2018) evaluate the effectiveness of English as a Foreign Language teaching practices in Dominican learning centers. This cross-sectional study utilizes a mixed-methods approach involving observations and interviews across several learning centers. While the specific sample size and data collection details are not mentioned, the study primarily employs qualitative analysis to draw conclusions. They found significant variations in pedagogical effectiveness depending on the training and resources available to educators. However, the study does not discuss the long-term impact on language proficiency or provide a comparative analysis with other teaching methods, which marks a limitation in the scope of its applicability and depth.

Shanker, Marian, and Swimmer (2015) review effective interventions for reaching OOSC, with a focus on early childhood development and non-formal education. They suggest that comprehensive community-based programs, including economic incentives like cash transfers, can significantly reduce OOSC numbers. The study synthesizes findings from various global contexts to propose actionable strategies for South Asia, providing a valuable resource for policymakers. However, the generalization of results across different socio-economic settings may be seen as a limitation.

Theoretical Framework

Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory, primarily developed by Bourdieu in 1980s, and later expanded by Coleman (1988) and Putnam (1995), revolves around the concept that social networks have intrinsic value. Bourdieu (1986) introduced the idea that social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu, 1986). Coleman (1988) built on this by discussing how social capital in families and communities facilitates the functioning of the society and contributes to the actions of individuals within that society. Putnam (1995) later popularized the concept further by linking it to civic engagement and the decline of social capital in the United States, emphasizing its role in facilitating cooperation and improving outcomes within a community.

Following the foundational work by Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam, numerous scholars have contributed to the theory of social capital from various perspectives. Nan Lin (2001) offered a network perspective on social capital, emphasizing its value in gaining access to resources through one's network and the return on investments in social relations. Lin's work helped to quantify the benefits of social capital in economic terms and expanded its applicability in market-based analyses. Field (2008) added an educational perspective by discussing how social capital impacts educational achievement through parental involvement and the role of communities in supporting schools. These contributions have broadened the scope of social capital theory, applying it to diverse fields such as economics, education, and organizational studies, thereby enhancing our understanding of its multifaceted impact.

However, Social Capital Theory has faced several criticisms, particularly concerning its breadth and application. Critics argue that the concept is overly broad and amorphous, making it difficult to measure precisely (Portes, 1998). Additionally, there is concern that social capital can reinforce existing social inequalities, as those with higher social capital tend to consolidate more resources, thereby perpetuating cycles of inequality (Portes, 1998). Despite these criticisms, the relevance of Social Capital Theory to the study of out-of-school children in North East Nigeria is significant. It provides a framework for understanding how community and non-state actor interventions can leverage existing social networks to enhance educational opportunities and support for out-of-school children, emphasizing the importance of trust, norms, and networks in facilitating educational engagement in disrupted environments.

Systems Theory

Systems Theory, developed by biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the 1940s, is a theoretical framework that views various systems biological, social, physical, and others as complex and interconnected structures that function as wholes and whose components are interrelated. Bertalanffy introduced General Systems Theory as a way to model the interdependence of relationships in living organisms, transcending traditional boundaries of academic disciplines. This theory emphasizes that an understanding of the components in isolation is insufficient without a holistic view of how these components interact within the system (von Bertalanffy, 1968). The main idea is that changes in one part of the system can have profound effects, both anticipated and unanticipated, on other parts of the system.

Following von Bertalanffy's initial formulations, numerous scholars across various fields have expanded on Systems Theory. In the social sciences, Talcott Parsons applied systems thinking to sociological phenomena, examining the interrelations of social structures and their functional equilibrium in society. Niklas Luhmann later advanced the theory within sociology by discussing social systems in terms of communication and operational closure, emphasizing how societal subsystems self-organize and evolve (Luhmann, 1995). In the field of ecology, scholars like Howard Odum applied systems theory to environmental management, illustrating how ecosystems can be seen as complex interacting systems, with feedback loops and cyclical resource flows that need careful management to maintain ecological balance (Odum, 1983).

Systems Theory has faced criticism for its sometimes overly abstract and broad application, making it difficult to operationalize for practical, measurable interventions in specific fields like education. Critics argue that the theory’s high level of abstraction can detract from addressing tangible issues and formulating specific policy interventions (Skyttner, 2005). However, its relevance to the study of out-of-school children in North East Nigeria is profound. Systems Theory can provide a valuable framework for understanding how various educational, social, economic, and political factors interact and impact the educational landscape. By using this theory, researchers can explore how interventions by community and non-state actors might influence the broader educational system and assess how changes in one part of the system such as community engagement in education can have ripple effects that enhance or hinder educational access and quality for out-of-school children.

Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative survey research design. A quantitative survey research design is highly suitable for this study due to its ability to systematically collect and analyze data across a large geographical and demographically diverse area such as North East Nigeria. This design allows for the collection of

extensive data from a broad sample, which is essential for understanding the varied impacts of community and non-state actors' interventions on different groups of out-of-school children. Moreover, quantitative methods provide objective, numerical data that can be used to assess the effectiveness of these interventions in a statistically robust manner, enabling policymakers to make evidence-based decisions. The use of standardized survey instruments ensures that the data are reliable and valid, facilitating comparisons and trend analysis over time (Bryman & Bell, 2019). Furthermore, the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of survey methodologies make them particularly appealing in regions with limited resources and accessibility issues (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Survey instruments, such as questionnaires with closed-ended questions on the variables under study, were used to collect the quantitative data.

The population for this study comprised of several key groups to fully understand the dynamics and effectiveness of the interventions in North East Nigeria. These groups include, adult school dropout, parents and guardian, community leaders, educators and school administrators, members of NGOs, community-based organizations, and local government officials. Focusing on a diverse group of stakeholders such as adult school dropouts, parents and guardians, community leaders, educators and school administrators, members of NGOs, community-based organizations, and local government officials is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics and effectiveness of interventions for out-of-school children in North East Nigeria. Each group brings a unique perspective that is critical to identifying the multifaceted barriers to education as well as the varied effectiveness of different intervention strategies. Adult school dropouts provide firsthand insights into the challenges faced by out-of-school children and the long-term impacts of dropping out. Parents and guardians offer perspectives on familial and socio-economic factors influencing educational access. Community leaders are key to understanding community norms and mobilizing community support for interventions. Educators and administrators can assess the educational system's capacity and the direct impact of interventions on school reintegration. NGO members and CBOs are instrumental in designing and executing intervention programs, and their insights are vital for evaluating program efficacy and sustainability. Finally, local government officials help gauge the alignment of these interventions with governmental policies and their support for sustaining educational initiatives. This holistic approach ensures that all aspects of the educational ecosystem are considered, leading to more effective and sustainable educational outcomes.

However, due to the difficulties associated with conducting research among all subjects of a population and the difficulties in obtaining the exact population of the targeted group in North East, Nigeria, the sample size was determined using Cochran (1977) sample size determination formula for calculating an infinite or unknown population. The sample size determination formula proposed by Cochran (1977) is $n=Z^2 \times P (1 -$

P)/C^2, where n is the sample size for the study, Z^2 is the Z value (1.96) at the 95% confidence interval, C is the margin of error (5%), P is the population proportion, 0.5, and 1 - P is 0.5. A sample size of 384 was obtained using this formula. However, a 30% attrition rate was applied to the determined sample size, resulting in a new sample size of 499, in line with the opinion of Singh and Masuku (2014); Muritala and Ajetunmobi (2019).

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire, and respondents were chosen using the combination of stratified sampling, cluster sampling and snowball sampling techniques. The combination of stratified, cluster, and snowball sampling techniques in the study enhances data reliability and depth by addressing diverse research needs. Stratified sampling ensures detailed analysis across different demographic and geographic subgroups, crucial for understanding varied needs and intervention impacts. Cluster sampling tackles logistical and security issues in North East Nigeria, simplifying data collection and ensuring broad population representation despite accessibility challenges. Snowball sampling reaches out-of-school children who are difficult to access through traditional methods, providing valuable insights from hard-to-reach groups. Together, these methods complement each other, offering a comprehensive view of the situation and the effectiveness of the interventions.

The questionnaire was distributed evenly across all the six states in North East (Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe State) in Nigeria. To ensure equal distribution of the questionnaire, the sample size was increased to 510; thus, 85 copies of the questionnaire were distributed in each state of North East, Nigeria. The questionnaires were administered personally with the aid of six (6) trained research assistants, fluent in both English and local languages to assist with data collection. Prior to full-scale administration, the questionnaire was pilot tested with a small group from each of the six (6) state to ensure clarity, relevance, and appropriateness for the local context. Necessary adjustments were made based on pilot test feedback.

Out of 510 copies of questionnaire, 417 copies which account for 82% of the total questionnaire administered were valid and useful for data analysis. The analysis of the collected data was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), employing SmartPLS 3.0 software. This method is recommended for its efficacy in defining measurement and structural models, as well as for testing hypotheses, as outlined by Hair et al. (2021). PLS-SEM is a robust statistical tool extensively utilized in social sciences among other fields, for its capacity to model and analyze complex variable relationships. The SmartPLS software is specifically designed for SEM analysis and is favored in business and social science research for its ability to manage complex data structures that are not normally distributed, making it ideal for both exploratory and predictive modeling tasks (Hair, Henseler, & Sarstedt, 2021; Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015; Sarstedt, Ringle, & Hair, 2022). Below is the model designed for this study:

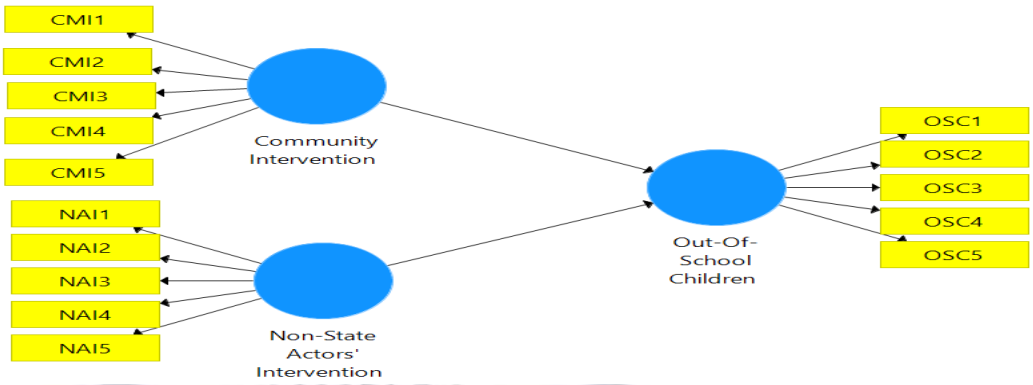

Fig. 1 The Model of the Study

The analysis utilizing PLS-SEM was conducted with SmartPLS software, following a structured two-step approach. Initially, the measurement model was evaluated to ensure the reliability and validity of the constructs used. Subsequently, the structural model was examined to test the proposed relationships among empowerment programs, employment opportunities, and youth migration in Nigeria. This method provides a comprehensive analysis of both direct and indirect effects, offering an in-depth understanding of the dynamics influencing youth migration in the country.

To uphold the ethical standards of the research, stringent ethical protocols were adhered to. Informed consent was secured from all participants, duly informed about their right to discontinue participation at any point without any consequences. Additionally, the confidentiality of participant responses was rigorously maintained, and all data collected was anonymized, secure and stored to protect privacy of the respondents.

Result And Discussions

Assessment of Measurement Model

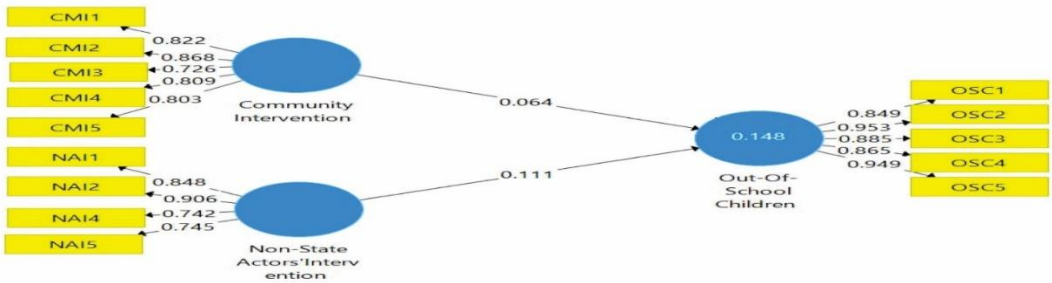

Fig. 2: Measurement model of the study constructs and indicators.
Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

Indicators' Loadings

Table 1: Factor Loadings

Items	Community Intervention Loadings	Non-State Actors' Intervention Loadings	Out-Of-School Children Loadings
CMI1	0.822		
CMI2	0.868		
CMI3	0.726		
CMI4	0.809		
CMI5	0.803		
NAI1		0.848	
NAI2		0.906	
NAI4		0.742	
NAI5		0.745	
OSC1			0.849
OSC2			0.953
OSC3			0.885
OSC4			0.865
OSC5			0.949

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

The table 1 present the result of factor loadings fo the variables use in this study. The factor loadings for the items associated with Community Intervention range from 0.726 to 0.868, indicating a strong and consistent relationship between the items and the underlying construct of Community Intervention. Items such as CMI2 (0.868) and CMI1 (0.822) show particularly high loadings, suggesting that they are very effective indicators of community intervention in the context of the study. The lowest loading is observed for CMI3 (0.726), which, while slightly lower, still exceeds the commonly recommended threshold of 0.7 for acceptable loadings, indicating good construct validity. These results imply that the measures used to assess community interventions are reliably capturing the intended construct within the study's framework (Hair, et al, 2022).

For Non-State Actors' Intervention, the factor loadings show strong relationships with the construct, ranging from 0.742 to 0.906. The deletion of item NAI3 due to a low factor loading (not shown) suggests that it did not sufficiently represent the non-state actors' intervention construct as well as the other items. Such an exclusion is common in scale development and refinement to enhance the psychometric properties of the measurement instrument. Items NAI2 (0.906) and NAI1 (0.848) display particularly robust loadings, confirming their strong contributions to capturing the essence of non-state actors' interventions. This deletion and the resultant loadings enhance the overall reliability and validity of this scale segment, aligning with best practices in measurement theory (Hair et al., 2022).

The factor loadings for the Out-Of-School Children construct are exceptionally high, with all loadings above 0.849, and particularly high loadings for items like OSC2 (0.953) and OSC5 (0.949). These values indicate a very strong alignment of these items with the construct, suggesting excellent internal consistency and construct validity. High factor loadings like these are indicative of well-defined and relevant items that accurately reflect the construct of interest, making them reliable for further analysis within the study. The strong loadings also suggest that the items are capturing a significant amount of the variance related to out-of-school children in the model (Hair et al., 2010).

Validity and Reliability of the Constructs

Table 2: Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Community Intervention	0.872	0.903	0.651
Non-State Actor' Intervention	0.831	0.886	0.662
Out-Of-School Children	0.942	0.956	0.812

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

The results presented in Table 2 provide information about the reliability and validity of the constructs used in the study. The Community Intervention construct demonstrates strong reliability and validity, as indicated by a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.872 and Composite Reliability of 0.903, both of which are well above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.7, suggesting excellent internal consistency (Hair et al., 2022). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for this construct is 0.651, surpassing the minimum recommended value of 0.5, which indicates a good level of convergent validity. This suggests that the items grouped under the Community Intervention construct are highly correlated and effectively represent the construct (Hair, et al., 2022).

For the Non-State Actor' Intervention construct, the reliability scores are also robust with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.831 and a Composite Reliability of 0.886, reflecting strong internal consistency. The AVE is 0.662, indicating that a significant proportion of the variance in the items is accounted for by the construct they are intended to measure, thus demonstrating strong convergent validity. These metrics affirm that the scale used to measure Non-State Actor' Intervention is both reliable and valid, capturing the construct accurately (Hair et al., 2022).

The Out-Of-School Children construct shows exceptionally high reliability, as evidenced by a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.942 and a Composite Reliability of 0.956. Both metrics suggest outstanding internal consistency. Additionally, the AVE for this construct is 0.812, which is significantly higher than the recommended

threshold, indicating excellent convergent validity. This high level of AVE signifies that the construct has a strong explanatory power regarding the variance observed in the measurement items, confirming that the items are well-suited to measure the intended construct (Hair et al., 2022)

Discriminant Validity

Table 3: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Out-Of-School Children	Non-State Actor' Intervention	Community Intervention
Out-Of-School Children			
Community Intervention	0.419		
Non-State Actor' Intervention	0.211	0.295	

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio between the constructs of Out-Of-School Children and Community Intervention is 0.419. This ratio is a relative measure of discriminant validity in structural equation modeling, typically used to compare the distinctiveness of two constructs. An HTMT value below 0.90 suggests that the constructs are indeed distinct and exhibit good discriminant validity (Henseler, et al., 2015). The value of 0.419 indicates that the Out-Of-School Children and Community Intervention constructs are sufficiently different from each other, confirming that each captures unique aspects not overlapped significantly by the other, thus supporting the discriminant validity of the model

Assessment of the Structural Model

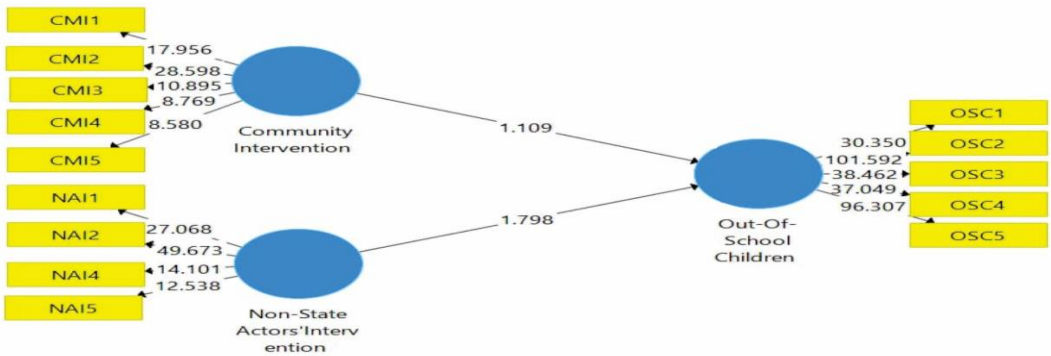

Fig. 3: Structural Model and Hypotheses Testing

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

Path Coefficients

Table 4: Path Coefficient

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Community Intervention -> Out-Of-School Children	0.064	0.077	0.058	1.109	0.268
Non-State Actor' Intervention -> Out-Of-School Children	0.111	0.116	0.062	1.798	0.073

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

The path coefficient analysis reveals that the effect of Community Intervention on Out-Of-School Children is 0.064, with a sample mean of 0.077 and a standard deviation of 0.058. The T statistic of 1.109 and a p-value of 0.268 suggest that this relationship is not statistically significant. This implies that within the context of this study, Community Intervention has a minimal and non-significant impact on Out-Of-School Children in North East Nigeria. The relatively low T statistic and the p-value exceeding the conventional threshold of 0.05 indicate that any changes in community intervention strategies are unlikely to influence the out-of-school children status within the sample studied.

This finding revealed that community intervention has positive but insignificant impact on Out-Of-School Children in North East Nigeria. This means that community intervention in North East Nigeria to end Out-Of-School Children is good but not sufficient to end the menace. The findings imply that while the community interventions implemented might be heading in the right direction (positive coefficient), they are not impactful enough alone to significantly alter the status of out-of-school children in the region. This could be due to a variety of reasons such as insufficient scale, scope, or intensity of the interventions relative to the magnitude of the problem, or other external factors that were not controlled for in this study.

This finding is in line with the finding of Ogedi (2024) who found that out-of-school children in Nigeria are primarily due to economic and cultural constraints align with the current study's findings about community interventions. Both studies highlight that while interventions are positive, they are not sufficiently impactful alone to end the issue, pointing to underlying socio-economic and cultural barriers as key challenges.

The path coefficient for the impact of Non-State Actor' Intervention on Out-Of-School Children is 0.111, with a sample mean of 0.116 and a standard deviation of 0.062. The T statistic here is 1.798, and the p-value is 0.073, indicating a marginal trend towards statistical significance but still not meeting the conventional p-value cutoff of 0.05. This suggests a slightly stronger, yet not definitive, relationship between Non-State Actor' Interventions and their effect on Out-Of-School Children compared to Community Intervention. Although this relationship did not achieve statistical significance, the trend suggests that interventions by

non-state actors may have a potential impact on reducing the number of out-of-school children, warranting further investigation into specific aspects of these interventions that might contribute to such an outcome.

This finding revealed that Non-State Actor' Intervention has positive but insignificant impact on Out-Of-School Children in North East Nigeria. This finding indicates that while interventions by Non-State Actors have a positive direction of impact on reducing the number of Out-Of-School Children in North East Nigeria, the effect is not statistically significant. Essentially, this suggests that although these interventions are likely contributing beneficially to the issue, they are not potent or extensive enough on their own to make a substantial difference in the educational status of children in this region. This result may point to a variety of underlying issues, such as the scale of the interventions being too small, the nature of the interventions not fully addressing the key barriers keeping children out of school, or possibly the interventions not reaching the most critical segments of the out-of-school population. Therefore, while the efforts of non-state actors are aligned positively with educational goals, their current impact is limited in North East Nigeria.

Multicollinearity Test

Table 5: Inner VIF Values

	Out-Of-School Children
Community Intervention	1.316
Non-State Actor' Intervention	1.321

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

The Inner VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) values reported for the constructs in the model—Community Intervention at 1.316 and Non-State Actor' Intervention at 1.321—indicate that there is no significant multicollinearity within the structural model used in the study. VIF values measure how much the variance of an estimated regression coefficient increases if predictors are correlated. A VIF value below 5 is generally considered acceptable, indicating that the predictor variables do not suffer from severe multicollinearity (Hair, et al, 2010). The VIF values obtained in this analysis are well below this threshold, suggesting that each construct contributes independently to the model without undue influence from overlapping variance with other variables in the model. This independent contribution of variables is crucial for ensuring the reliability of the regression estimates and the overall validity of the model's findings

R Square

Tabe 6: R Square

	R Square	**R Square Adjusted**
Out-Of-School Children	0.481	0.411

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

Table 6 presents the R Square values for the structural model, The R Square value for the Out-Of-School Children construct is 0.481, with an adjusted R Square of 0.411, as indicated in the SmartPLS output. The R Square, or coefficient of determination, measures the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is predictable from the independent variables. In this case, it suggests that about 48.1% of the variability in the status of Out-Of-School Children can be explained by the model's independent variables, such as Community Intervention and Non-State Actor' Intervention. The adjusted R Square, which accounts for the number of predictors in the model and adjusts for the sample size, is slightly lower at 41.1%. This adjusted value provides a more accurate measure in the context of multiple predictors, indicating a good fit of the model to the data. This level of explanation is significant, indicating that while the model captures a substantial portion of the factors influencing Out-Of-School Children, there are still other variables not included in the model that may account for the remaining variance.

Table 7: F Square *Effect Size*

	Out-Of-School Children
Community Intervention	0.012
Non-State Actor' Intervention	0.015

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

Table 7 presents the f-square values. The F Square values presented in the SmartPLS output for the study measure the effect size of each independent variable on the dependent variable, Out-Of-School Children. Specifically, the F Square value for Community Intervention is 0.012, and for Non-State Actor' Intervention, it is 0.015. These values suggest that both Community Intervention and Non-State Actor' Intervention have a small effect on the variation in the status of Out-Of-School Children. In terms of practical significance, the low F Square values indicate that while both types of interventions nominally influence the issue of children being out of school, the strength of these influences is relatively weak. This suggests that other factors not included in the model might be exerting more substantial impacts on the Out-Of-School Children variable, or that the scale and scope of the interventions measured need to be increased to make significant impact.

Model Fit

Table 8: Fit Summary

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.063	0.063
d_ULS	1.104	1.104
d_G	2.630	2.630
Chi-Square	2264.225	2264.225
NFI	0.642	0.642

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2025

The Fit Summary table from the SmartPLS output shows various model fit indices for both the Saturated Model and the Estimated Model, indicating that the values for both models are identical across all metrics. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value is 0.063 for both models, which is below the commonly accepted threshold of 0.08, suggesting a good fit between the hypothesized model and the observed data. The discrepancy (d_ULS and d_G) values, 1.104 and 2.630 respectively, along with a Chi-Square value of 2264.225, further indicate the model's ability to adequately represent the data structure. However, the Normed Fit Index (NFI) value is 0.642, which is below the commonly accepted criterion of 0.90 or higher for a good fit. This lower NFI suggests that the model, while fitting the data to a reasonable degree indicated by SRMR and discrepancy measures, could potentially be improved to better explain the variance and covariances in the data set. The uniformity of the fit indices between the saturated and estimated models suggests that the model simplifications or estimations have not degraded the fit, maintaining the integrity of the theoretical structure in the analysis.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study's findings indicate that both Community and Non-State Actor Interventions have a positive yet statistically insignificant impact on reducing the number of Out-Of-School Children in North East Nigeria. Despite the good intentions behind these interventions, they are insufficient on their own to significantly alter the educational landscape due to various underlying issues such as inadequate scale, intensity, or perhaps misalignment with the core barriers that contribute to the high rates of out-of-school children. The marginal effects observed suggest that while these interventions are a step in the right direction, they need to be significantly strengthened or coupled with broader, more robust educational policies and socio-economic reforms to effectively address the complexities of educational deprivation in the region.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

I. Community leaders and other stakeholders in North East should scale up and integrated with broader social programs. Specifically, community interventions should not only focus on educational activities but also address underlying socio-economic issues such as poverty, healthcare, and parental education that are closely linked to educational access. Additionally, community leaders and stakeholders should be trained and empowered to identify and tackle local barriers to education, ensuring that interventions are culturally appropriate and directly address the specific needs of their communities
II. Non-State Actors should review and adapt these interventions to better meet the needs of the target population. This can be achieved through focusing on creating collaborative frameworks with government bodies to ensure that their interventions are aligned with national educational policies

and strategies. Finally, a rigorous monitoring and evaluation framework should be implemented to continuously assess the effectiveness of these interventions and make data-driven adjustments to improve outcomes.

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