

Perceptions Of Insecurity And Social Cohesion In Building Resilience Among Residents In North-East Nigeria

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Abstract

Building resilience is vital to devising the ability to overcome challenges, especially in times of insecurity. The objective of this study is to assess the level of perception of insecurity and social cohesion of residents in northeast Nigeria. The study also determines the influence of the perception of insecurity, social cohesion, length of stay, and age on resilience. The study sampled 383 respondents in Gwange, Bolori, Yerwa and Mai-Sandari of Maiduguri metropolis. The data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed a moderate level of both perceptions of insecurity and social cohesion. The study also indicates that while the perception of insecurity predicts resilience ($\beta = .297, p < .000$) and social cohesion ($\beta = .444, p < 0.00$), age and length of stay ($\beta = -.012, p < .770$ and ($\beta = -.041, p < .324$) do not influence residents' resilience in Maiduguri. This study recommended that community engagement programs that aim to foster a sense of unity, and collaboration among residents, strengthen the existing social support networks within the neighbourhood. Similarly, community involvement in the decision-making process should be implemented and any form of initiative should be culturally sensitive and aligned with the needs of the people.

Keywords: Insecurity, Resilience, Social Cohesion, Residents North-East

Introduction

The term "insecurity" can be interpreted differently, but it generally refers to a state of doubt, fear, and danger. Insecurity is defined by Beland (2005) as a feeling of nervousness or fear caused by the absence of peace and safety. Achumba et al. (2013) viewed insecurity as being exposed to threats, a situation that causes worry or danger. Operationally, the state of insecurity is denoted by the insurgency in Borno state, resulting in the loss of lives and property, and a disturbance of peace and security. The *Boko Haram* insurgency, primarily concentrated in the north-eastern region of the country, has been a major contributor to this instability. The overall impact of this insecurity manifests in numerous incidents of violence, senseless killings, extensive property damage, and social and economic disruptions. Displacements and underdevelopment that are presently being experienced in most parts of the state (Alegbeleye, 2014; Obi, 2015). Following the responses and feelings of insecurity among Maiduguri residents, several efforts were put in place to end this threat of insecurity and reduce people's mixed feelings such as: increasing the rate of surveillance all over the state, increasing the military personnel and police forces visibility across the state (Adegbami, 2013). Furthermore, the Anti-Terrorism Act was enacted in 2011 to bolster security measures (Oyebode, 2012) and the Joint Task Force (JTF) was created to enhance security. The JTF comprises the police, state security agencies, the military, immigration, customs and prison personnel saddled with the responsibility for protecting life and property with the sole aim of flushing the activities of terrorism and other forms of crime (Adegbami, 2013). Moreover, in June 2013, the youth in Maiduguri town voluntarily formed a social network group named Civilian Joint Task Force or Youth Vigilantes Group, locally called Yan Gora to assist the government efforts (This Day June 2013).

The efforts of these local social network groups have tremendously assisted in the fight against terrorism, and social network groups have significantly reduced fear and anxiety and built resilience among residents. In 2013 the effort of this local social network group (was acknowledged in a CNN report, by the then-governor of Borno State. The participation of the Yan Gora in surveillance has reduced the activities of the insurgency group and the group's success was largely attributed to their knowledge of the area's terrain and familiarity with the insurgency group's activities. Thus, this study attempts to describe the level of perception of insecurity and social cohesion and to investigate the influence of insecurity, social cohesion, age and length of stay among residents in the Gwange, Bolori, Yerwa and Mai-Sandari of Maiduguri metropolis of Borno State.

Fostering Resilience through Shifts in Perceptions of Insecurity and Social Cohesion.

Resilience seems to be the most obvious word used when there is a crisis that demands an emergency response. Resilience and social cohesion are among the commonly used terms employed in social science discourse regarding uncertainty (Froese, 2023). Current approaches explored to address insecurity challenges are inadequate, especially considering the increasing level of insecurity faced globally. There is a quest for more feasible approaches that can effectively tackle the complex challenges of insecurity. Resilience is one such approach that has currently gained popularity as a coping strategy for any form of disaster (Shaw and Maythorne, 2013; Jore, 2023) and is usually applied in multiple disciplines, including ecology, psychology, sociology and many others (Ross et al., 2023). Resilience has become a central concept in social science and is attracting wide attention from researchers. (Constas et al., 2021). Thus, in crisis-prone areas where the perception of insecurity exists among residents, social cohesion (in the form local organisation network) is one of the

effective mechanisms employed to improve resilience among residents. Social cohesion refers to the manner in which individuals within a society, group, or organization interact with one another and collaborate (Dany and Dijkzeul, 2022).

The concept of social cohesion has been extensively examined within the realm of social sciences. The sociological perspective addresses social cohesion to elucidate the mechanisms through which affiliations, networks, norms, and trust contribute to the emergence of cooperation, solidarity, and a communal sense (González-Bailón and Lelkes, 2023; Friedkin, 2004). Despite the wealth of literature dedicated to this subject, a universally accepted definition of social cohesion remains elusive (Albarosa and Elsner, 2022). One of the earliest articulations was presented by Durkheim (1897), who conceptualised social cohesion as the absence of social conflict, encompassing disputes related to wealth, gender, race, or ethnicity, coupled with the presence of robust social bonds among society members. Subsequent scholars have emphasised various attributes associated with social cohesion, such as cooperative interactions among individuals (Cooley, 1909), the shared identification of individuals with others possessing similar characteristics, and the collective inclination of individuals to sustain affiliation with the group.

The term "social cohesion" means the abstract notion of individuals' sentiments within their community, the interpersonal ties they cultivate, and their avenues for community engagement (Mair et al., 2023). Elevated levels of social cohesion correlate with favourable perceptions of security and the overall quality of life within society (Kaplanidou et al., 2013). Community cohesion is a related term to social cohesion and refers to the degree of closeness and connection between individuals within a society, a city or a neighbourhood (Dekker and Bolt, 2005), these connections mean belonging to voluntary groups such as clubs and neighbourhood associations. Schuyt (1997) added that it is not only individual participation in societal institutions and social contacts between people but also their orientation towards collective goals. This implies that residential-based networks are an essential part of social cohesiveness (Castells, 1997). Similarly, Kearns and Forrest (2000) argued that a cohesive society enables the sharing of common ideas among residents, as such, enabling them to identify and achieve common goals, through sharing of a common set of moral values. Therefore, Community cohesion may be seen as a process of different communities getting along, working together and understanding each other and entails building a sense of unity around real-life circumstances.

Forrest and Kearns (1999) argued that social networks are what differentiate neighbourhoods and these social networks within the residential neighbourhood are believed to play important roles in day-to-day activities, resulting in building social cohesion which enables tolerance, and cooperation, and consequently leading to a feeling of belonging and a sense of social order. According to Liu and Besser (2003), improvement in a community is dependent on individual involvement in communal activities, making it easy for people to relate and make friends, thereby having a sense of attachment to their neighbourhood. Kearns and Forrest (2000) illustrate the importance of a cohesive society towards contributing to community development, well-being and residents' willingness to collectively find solutions to critical problems such as insecurity that residents perceive in their neighbourhood.

Methodology

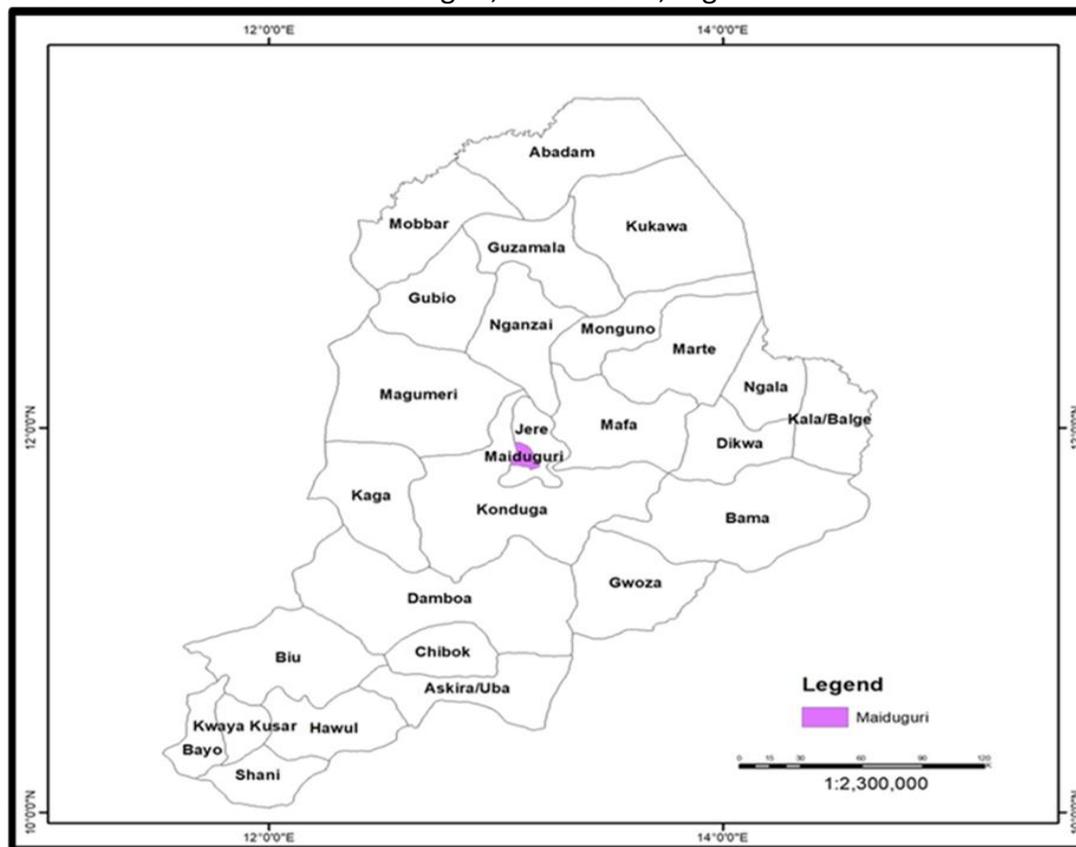
This section delineates the methodologies and procedures employed to gather data for the research, as well as the approach used for data analysis. It encompasses the research design,

study location, the specified population, the requisite sample size, and the data collection procedure.

Employing a quantitative study design facilitates the extrapolation of findings from the study sample to a broader population (Neuman, 2006). Hence a quantitative method will be employed for the research.

Study area

The research was conducted in Maiduguri, Borno state, Nigeria.



Borno state with Maiduguri as the capital is situated in the Sahel Savanna area of north-eastern Nigeria at scope $11^{\circ}05'$ North and longitude $13^{\circ}05'$ east and around 350m above sea level. Maiduguri has a mean yearly precipitation and temperature of around 630mm and 32°C respectively, though the temperature can go as high as 48°C from March through May. Modern Maiduguri known as Yerwa was established in 1907. It is the biggest city in north-eastern Nigeria.

Population of the Study Area

The focus demographic for this research includes individuals residing in the primary districts of Gwange, Bolori, Yerwa, and Mai-Sandari within the Maiduguri metropolis. The participants consisted of residents aged 18 years and older. The total population under consideration is 540,016, and a sample of 383 was chosen using census technique.

Data Analysis

Data collected for this present study was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25. Descriptive statistics using low, moderate and high to describe the levels of perception of insecurity and community cohesiveness. Questionnaires served as the

instrument for data collection, and the data was analysed using frequency counts, tables and percentages while multiple linear regression was used to explore the relationship between the perception of insecurity and social cohesion and resilience.

Results and Discussion

This study aims to describe the level of perception of insecurity and social cohesion among residents using descriptive statistics and the results are presented next in this section.

The respondents' level of perception of insecurity, is depicted in Table 1.

Table 1.

Frequency and Percentages of the Level of Perception on Insecurity

S/N	Statements	Levels			Total
		Low%	Moderate%	High%	
1	I feel unsafe to carry out my social economic activities in the neighbourhood due to fear of Boko Haram attack at any point in time.	128(33.4)	86(22.5)	169(44.1)	High
2	The nature of the neighbourhood residential buildings makes me feel safe.	112(29.2)	101(26.4)	170(44.4)	High
3	But despite the security measures, I will relocate if the Boko Haram attacks continue to intensify	113(29.5)	80(20.9)	190(49.6)	High
4	The structure of the residential building in the neighbourhood gives me protection from sporadic shooting from both Boko Haram and security agencies during an attack.	133(29.5)	93(24.3)	177(46.2)	High
5	The youth vigilante group activities in my neighbourhood make me feel protected from unexpected Boko Haram attacks.	86(22.5)	78(20.4)	219(57.2)	High
6	The presence of security operatives in the neighbourhood makes me feel safe.	84(21.9)	57(14.9)	242(63.2)	High
	Aggregate	44(11.5)	194(50.7)	145(37.9)	Moderate

N = 383, Low level: (1-2.33), Moderate: (2.34-3.66) and High (3.67-5.0)

The items were used to capture the respondents' perception of vulnerability and capacity to confront the situation. The analysis revealed that; the respondents highly agreed that, the nature of the neighbourhood residential buildings makes them feel safe (n=170, 44.4%), and the structure of the residential building in the neighbourhood gives them protection from sporadic shooting from both *Boko Haram* and security agencies during attack (n=177, 46.2%). Additionally, they indicated high agreement on how unsafe they feel to carry out their socio-economic activities in the neighbourhood due to fear of *Boko Haram* at any point in time (n=169, 44.1%) and intention to leave the area if the attack continues (n=190, 49.6%). More so, they agreed that the activities of the vigilante group in their neighbourhood (n=219,

57.2%), as well as the presence of the security operatives (n=242, 63.2%), make them feel protected and safe from unexpected *Boko Haram* attacks. From the analysis, it can be deduced that the overall aggregate score (n=194, 50.7%) shows that respondents feel moderately protected by the nature of their neighbourhood and structure settings. In addition, the efforts of the security operative with support from the vigilante groups relatively reduced the feeling and fear of people towards insecurity. Even though Sahel Standard, Oct, (2016) indicates that the porous nature of the border and neighbourhood in Maiduguri makes it prone to attack, however, the result indicated a moderate level of feelings/perception of insecurity.

Table. 2 depicts the description of the level of how members of the neighbourhood cooperate to form organisations to protect their neighbourhood.

Table 2.
Level of Social Cohesion

S/N	Statements	Levels			Total
		Low%	Moderate%	High%	
1	I am interested in residing in this neighbourhood.	101(26.4)	97(25.3)	185(48.3)	High
2	I feel like a member of this neighbourhood.	98(25.6)	97(25.3)	188(49.1)	High
3	I visit my neighbours at their homes.	70(18.3)	90(23.5)	223(58.)	High
4	The relationships and connections I have with my neighbours hold significant value to me.	64(16.7)	95(24.8)	224(58.5)	High
5	If possible, I would prefer to relocate from this neighbourhood.	135(35.2)	73(19.1)	175(45.7)	High
6	If my neighbours are planning something positive, I assume they're doing it on behalf of the whole community.	71(18.5)	100(26.1)	212(55.4)	High
7	If I need advice about something, I could ask someone in my neighbourhood.	79(20.6)	108(28.2)	196(51.2)	High
8	I agree with my neighbours on what matters most in life.	62(16.2)	90(23.5)	231(60.3)	High
9	I have faith that my neighbours would assist me in case of an emergency.	59(15.4)	83(21.7)	241(62.9)	High
10	I feel a sense of loyalty towards the people in my neighbourhood.	57(14.9)	79(20.6)	247(64.5)	High
11	I borrow things from my neighbours and exchange favours with them.	76(19.8)	86(22.5)	221(57.7)	High
12	I am willing to collaborate with others to improve my neighbourhood.	77(20.1)	70(18.3)	236(61.6)	High
13	I intend to live in this neighbourhood for several years to come.	92(24.0)	119(31.1)	172(44.9)	High
14	I consider myself similar to the residents of this neighborhood.	82(21.4)	101(26.4)	200(52.2)	High
15	I rarely have neighbours visiting my house.	129(33.7)	85(22.2)	169(44.1)	High

16	I feel a strong sense of community with the other people in my neighbourhood.	79(20.6)	98(25.6)	206(53.8)	High
17	I frequently take the time to stop and have conversations with people who live in my neighbourhood.	76(19.8)	82(21.4)	225(58.7)	High
18	I feel a sense of community by residing in this neighbourhood.	63(16.4)	77(20.1)	243(63.4)	High
Aggregate		27(7%)	185(48.3%)	171(44.6)	Moderate

N = 383, Low level: (1-2.33), Moderate: (2.34-3.66) and High (3.67-5.0)

The survey participants expressed a strong sense of social cohesion, as evidenced by their belief that their neighbors would assist them in emergencies (n=221, 57.7%), a feeling of loyalty to people in their neighborhood (n=247, 64.5%), and a sense of community derived from living in the neighborhood (n=243, 63.4%). Additionally, the respondents showed a high level of agreement on statements related to their connection with fellow neighborhood members, such as their willingness to collaborate on initiatives to improve the neighborhood (n=236, 61.6%) and a profound sense of fellowship with others in the community (n=206, 53.8%). Consequently, the analysis suggests a notable emphasis on community cooperation for safeguarding against attacks by the insurgency group.

Moreover, the sense of belonging and loyalty to the community forms the basis of people coming together to form vigilante groups to ensure security in their area. Additionally, the interaction among the members of the neighbourhood in terms of visiting each other, playing an important role in each other’s lives and helping each other has enhanced the cooperation among the communities to protect their neighbourhood against attacks. Therefore, people’s participation in neighbourhood activities depends on their bond with community and civic organizations, as well as the trust they have in such organizations. This is in support of Lee's (2008) findings, which revealed that a cohesive neighbourhood has a higher social control which subsequently leads to reduced probability of incidences of nefarious activities such as robbery and assaults. Similarly, Liu and Besser (2003) concluded that having a sense of belonging towards a community encourages involvement in activities for the development of the neighbourhood. However, the moderate level of cohesion (n=185, 48.3%) is a clear indication that respondents in Maiduguri metropolis have good cooperation and participate actively in their social network and solidarity.

A Multiple Linear Regression analysis was conducted to determine how well certain independent variables (perception of insecurity, social cohesion, age and length of stay) predict the dependent variable (resilience). The resulting regression equation was:

$$\hat{Y} = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + e_i \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

Where:

\hat{Y} = resilience;

X1 = social cohesion;

X2 = perception of insecurity;

X3 = length of stay;

X4 = age;

e_i = random error.

The study's general hypothesis is expressed as:

$$H_0: Y = \beta_0 + e_i + e_i$$

$$H_1: Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + e_i$$

Operationally, when regressed against the dependent variable resilience, the independent variables perception of insecurity, social cohesion, age, and length of stay are significant.

Table 3.
Multiple Linear Regression on Resident's Resilience

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	
(Constant)	2.061	1.085		1.900	.058
Perception of Security	.260	.043	.297	5.990	.000
Social Cohesion	.173	.019	.444	8.919	.000
Age	-.005	.017	-.012	-.293	.770
Length of Stay	-.017	.017	-.041	-.988	.324

Note R2 =.447, Adjust R Square .441

The result of the Regression analysis, for the resilience, is expressed as $\hat{Y} = 2.061 + (.260 X_1 + (.173) X_2 + (-.005) X_3 + (-.017) X_4 + e_i$

According to Table 3, the Multiple Linear Regression analysis showed that around 45% of the variation in the level of residence resilience was explained by the independent variable ($R^2=0.447$). Additionally, the study revealed that perception of insecurity and social cohesion were significant predictors of resilience. The standardized regression coefficient in Table 3 highlighted that social cohesion is the most significant predictor of resilience ($\beta = .444, t = 8.919, p < 0.00$). followed by the perception of insecurity ($\beta = .297, t = 5.990, p < .000$). This implies that one standard deviation in social cohesion and perception of insecurity will lead to 44.4% and 29.7% increase in resilience respectively.

This is consistent with Eshel and Kimhi (2016), who found that individual or community resilience is positively associated with the level of social cohesion. This is further supported by a study carried out by Forrest and Kearns (2001), where they concluded that social cohesion can be encouraged through, social solidarity, shared norms, social control, social network and a sense of belonging to each other and the place where they live. Thus, the significant impact of social cohesion as found in the present study could be due to the resident's belief in the ability of the community to render help in terms of emergencies.

An indication that the perception of insecurity predicates resilience is associated with social networks and civil solidarity commitment to the area. The majority of people surveyed believed that the support provided by the youth vigilante group (civilian joint task force) was the major reason why the people of Maiduguri perceived the insecurity as less and became resilient. According to a study by Ugwu et al. (2019), the psychological resilience of a community has a significant impact on how its members perceive insecurity. In other words, the higher the level of resilience in a community, the less likely its members are to be influenced by feelings of insecurity. This finding supports the results of a study by Islam et al. (2009), which found that people often rely on social networks and associations as a way to cope with difficult times.

However, the analysis indicates that age ($\beta = -.012$, $t = -.293$, $p < .770$) and length of stay ($\beta = -.041$, $t = -.988$, $p < .324$), are not predictors of resilience in Maiduguri. In contrast, a study conducted by Anacio et al. (2016) focused on a region in the Philippines that is susceptible to flooding. The study found that people who have lived in the area for a longer period have better economic opportunities. This is because long-term residents have established connections and developed skills that allow them to engage in profitable activities. Consequently, the region becomes a reliable source of income for them. To avoid potential hazards, relocating to another location would mean abandoning established economic activities, which could hurt their resilience. Also, a study conducted by Goroshit and Eshel (2013) indicates despite experiencing wars and terror attacks, the older Israelis' resilience has not decreased but rather strengthened due to their extensive life experience. The insignificant relationship between these variables and residents' resilience found in this study may be due to differences in the phenomenon being studied compared to other research on natural disasters.

Conclusion

The authors concluded that residents living in the Maiduguri neighbourhood have a moderate level of insecurity and social cohesion. Despite encountering security challenges, the community members maintain a moderate level of confidence and have established a social network to protect their neighbourhood and enhance the security situation. Community cohesiveness has been identified as the most significant factor contributing to the resilience of residents in Maiduguri. This cohesion is largely attributed to the activities of the security operation, with assistance from the civilian joint task force. The high level of integration among the residents has resulted in shared responsibility, with everyone making efforts to keep the neighbourhood safe. Furthermore, the transfer of the Military command to Maiduguri and the formation of the Joint Multi-national Joint Task Force (comprising of Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and Cameroon) have significantly contributed to curbing the incessant attacks by Boko Haram insurgents. All of these efforts have helped shape residents' perception towards insecurity, and as a result, increased their level of resilience

Recommendation

This study suggests the implementation of community engagement programs that aim to foster a sense of unity and collaboration among residents. Workshops should be organized to encourage open dialogue and shared experiences. Awareness campaigns should be conducted to educate residents about security measures and the importance of community social networks in counter-insurgency. Neighbourhood watch programs should be established, and information about local law enforcement initiatives should be disseminated. To strengthen the existing social support networks within the neighbourhood, residents should be encouraged to form community groups or clubs that promote mutual assistance and provide a platform for them to share their concerns and ideas. It is important to recognize the psychological impact of insecurity and establish psychosocial support programs for residents who may be experiencing stress or trauma. This could involve counselling services, support groups, or mental health awareness campaigns. Finally, it is crucial to involve the community in the decision-making process to ensure that any initiatives are culturally sensitive and align with the needs of the people living in the Maiduguri neighbourhood.

Disclosure statement

The authors have no personal or financial interests that could potentially influence the results or interpretation of their study.

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