

INSECURITY IN NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: IMPLICATIONS FOR GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

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Abstract

Insecurity in Nigeria educational system has become a growing challenge in Nigeria. The issue of insecurity however is not peculiar to the Nigerian nation but has become a global issue that needs urgent attention. Insecurity in schools have mass negative effects on students, teachers, school administrators and the general public. This paper examined the concept of insecurity and explored the level of insecurity activities in Nigerian schools. Causes of insecurity in Nigerian educational system were investigated bringing out the various forms of insecurity in our schools. Effects of insecurity on Nigerian schools were highlighted. This paper also focused on the implications for guidance counselors in minimizing insecurity in Nigerian schools. Finally, the paper recommends among others that Government should provide enough competent and well equipped security personnel for schools and Colleges. Displaced students should be given sufficient opportunity to go on with their learning Security gadgets should be provided in schools to monitor security system for proper teaching and learning in Nigerian schools.

Key Words: Insecurity, Educational System, Guidance and Counselling

Introduction

Globally, security has remained a subject of great concern. No nation or society can boast of being completely free from the problems ensued by insecurity. In the last two decades alone, countries like Israel, North Korea, Russia, USA and South Korea have experienced different forms of transnational violence, terrorism, kidnapping and insurgency. Socio-ethno religious conflicts have emerged in countries like Afghanistan, Nigeria and Kenya, while countries like Myanmar, Pakistan and Gambia have suffered political violence and politically induced tensions, suicide bombings and several other acts of criminality have risen and are fast spreading. As insecurity is heightening the understanding of its manifestations and consequences are also evolving.

The heightened challenge of insecurity in Nigerian schools is forcing many students out of school. According to Kayode (2021) these are really tough and challenging ties for the education sector in Nigeria. Going to school is fast becoming a nightmare for students as a result of the frequent attacks on school by bandits. Worse hit are schools in the north –west and

North-East region of the country, where the increasing level of insecurity has led to the closure of some schools. For the ones that are still open, learning takes place under an atmosphere of fear. The situation has forced many parents to withdraw their children from school. Some teachers too have long abandoned the classrooms not planning to come back. For a region that had been experiencing low school enrolment, the situation is now worse. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) now estimates the number of out-of-school children in the country at 13.2 million.

The growing insecurity in Nigeria has posed advance effects on Nigerian education system. According to UNICEF Nigeria, over 20 attacks have been carried out on schools in recent times with over 1,436 children abducted and 16 killed. The organization further reveals that of the 37 million school children in the country one million may not return to school, owing to attacks on schools by bandits in the North, even as the UNICEF country representative, Mr Peter Hawkins, stated that more than 200 children were still missing.

The inaccessibility of schools as a result of the inherent dangers therefore remains a serious challenge to the knowledge givers the learners and also other critical stakeholders. In most school attacked, the traumatic experience alone cannot easily be erased as such experience instills fear on the teachers and the students alike and make it very different for them to return back to school more so, the planning, coordinating, financing and evaluating of all education activities on students, teachers, and school heads in the schools attacked are often jeopardized while teaching and learning processes are hindered because the school environment are unsafe and learning can't be properly conducted and coordinated in an unsafe school environment.

Concept of Insecurity

Insecurity is the state of being subject to danger or injury, doubts, feeling of being unsafe, not self-confident, uneasy, being exposed or liable to risk or danger: insecurity caused by life threatening situations and circumstances. Ajagbe, Uyanne & Nuhu (2016) see insecurity in school to be classified into environmental and man-made.. This include all the menaces that threaten human survival, daily life and dignity such as environmental degradation, violation of human rights, violent, conflicts, ethnic clashes, bullying, kidnapping, sexual abuse, rape, ritual murder, robbery attack, activities of gun-men, religious fanaticism, wars, poverty, chronic unemployment and other forms of crimes.

Ajayi (2012) sees insecurity as synonymous with terrorism; it is the feeling of general unease or nervousness that may be triggered by perceiving of oneself to be vulnerable or inferior in some way, or a sense of vulnerability or instability which threatens ones self- image or ego. Insecurity simply means inadequately guarded or protected, unsafe, unsteady lacking of self- confidence, plagued by anxiety. Insecurity is linked to chronic hunger, terrorism and poverty. According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), human security is as freedom from fear and want Egbule (2005) described insecurity as the state of an individual who lacks in feelings of self-confidence. Insecurity is a term used to describe the individuals who feel inadequate, wanted, unloved and often nervous. Those who experience insecurity live uneasiness because they must bear the consequences of this uncomfortable state. Umezuldi & Afunugo (2016) said, insecurity occurs when the government is unable to protect its individuals, cherished-values and interest from threat. Furthermore, a country is insecure not only when its freedom and boundaries are violated but also when the individual and collective rights of the people to life are constantly violated with impunity.

Insecurity in the country became a very serious societal concern when it degenerated to a situation where some innocent school children were carted away in hundreds to an unknown destination by insurgents for a long time in a country that prides itself as a "giant". It is note worthy that efforts to locate the children and effect their rescue have remained fruitless. Some many unanswered questions arise from this phenomenon. Are the security agencies in the

country adequate well-trained, responsive to duty, equipped and well motivated to work. How safe are the schools.

Insecurity is crippling Nigeria's education system. In most parts of the country, schooling comes with its fair share of challenges, but when students risk losing their freedom or lives at school, our tomorrow is under attack. Nwobodo & Udenbunu (2017) explain that 800 secondary school and university students have been kidnapped in coordinated attacks by terrorists and bandits in the last two years. Although these abductions did not begin recently, they have become more frequent than in 2014 when 276 girls were abducted from government girls secondary school, Chibok, Borno state. Insecurity in Nigeria is drastically eating up the educational sector to the extent that students, teachers and the government are being frustrated, leading to educational decay.

Levels of insecurity in Nigerian educational institutions:

Incessant attacks on public institutions including schools where students had been kidnapped have been on the increase in recent times. Across the country, the number of out-of-school is increasing, majority due to insecurity, poor facilities, poverty and other factors. Daily trust visited schools in some states and gave their reports. Apart from challenges in public schools that have been there for decades, the recent onslaught on schools by bandits and kidnappers has pushed Nigeria to the edge in global ranking.

In Kaduna state, despite the implementation of free and compulsory education, residents say insecurity is leading the factors responsible for school dropouts, particularly in rural communities where banditry attacks have become incessant.

In Benue, insecurity occasioned by herders/farmers attacks and communal clashes, is said to be largely responsible for the high number of out-of-school children. The abduction of the Chibok Girls sparked global outrage and condemnation for the then Jonathan administration but outrage is not enough to solve a hydra-headed challenge such as kidnapping. If anything, the frequency of these abductions now in a way, normalizes the night mare. Once outraged, Nigerians are now in a state of acceptance. Acceptance that education in Nigeria will never be safe, that schooling is a risky venture that portends the loss of life and freedoms that it is normal to scurry around to raise millions in ransom for your child.

Owonikoko (2021) explained that in December 2020, 344 students were abducted from their hostels in Government Science Secondary School, Kankara, Katsina state, Barely two weeks later on December 20, 2020, 80 pupils of the Islamiya school, Mahuta, Kaduna state were abducted. In February 17, 2021, 27 students were abducted from GSS College, Kagara Niger state. In Zamfara state, 279 more girls of GSS Jangebe were abducted on February 26, 2021. On Feb 29, 2016, Babington Macaulay Junior Seminary, Lagos was attacked by gunmen who abducted three school girls in the dead of the night. On 6th October, 2016, armed men stormed Igbonla Model College in Epe, Lagos, Kidnapping the school's vice-principal, a teacher and four pupils. The list of attacks on schools is endless.

Amidst all these, there are only a handful of bandits being arrested and tried for their crimes despite re-assuring press releases from the presidency. It appears that banditry, as it were has become a lucrative industry in Nigeria. The risk of school in Nigeria today is death, where going to school could be compared to charging into battle amid a swarm of bullets.

Responding to the unrest, several states are shutting down boarding schools in violence prone areas. This will no doubt add to the over 13.5 million out-of-school children in Nigeria today. Schools attacked are not excluded from the effect of the crippling security challenges that threaten the security of the Nigerian state in general. Some of these challenges are also directly or indirectly linked to the critical security challenges that certainly have made schools vulnerable to attacks in Nigeria. These are:

- Inadequacies in manpower recruitment and training of security forces and law enforcement agencies.
- Lack of timely and promptness in the handling of security issue by government.
- Lack of citizen's involvement in state security management.
- Low standard of security awareness
- Reluctance by citizens to volunteer security information to law enforcement agencies.
- Slow threat response by government to security advances to threat assessment and neutralization.
- Lack of effective coordination and harnessing of human material and technical resources
- Poor funding of security agencies and low motivation of security personnel

Causes of Insecurity in Nigerian Educational System

Insecurity is one of, if not the most glaring and much talked about thing in Nigeria today. Acts of insecurity occur on daily basis throughout the country. Right thinking and sane Nigerians are really concerned about this ugly trend. Insecurity in the school environment influence the effective learning of children, it is a fundamental challenge holding Nigeria's national growth and educational development to ransom holding it down in perpetual stagnation. Akor, Abubakara & Ogunode (2022) have identified causes of insecurity in Nigerian education system as follows;

- i. Nonchallant attitude of school administrators on security:** Many school managers lack realistic school security strategies that spell out what security works need to be done who is to be held accountable, how the task should be done, when it must be done and why. Many school administrators do not efficiently recognize, direct, coordinate, supervise and monitor security activities in their schools.
- ii. Non execution of security duties by incompetent guards:** Akor et al (2022) noted that many security guards in schools do not engage in primary security duties of patrolling the school environment both by the day and by night, guiding of buildings; facilities and infrastructure; intelligence gathering and scouting. Poor performance of routine security duties by security guards across the schools has been identified as one of the major causes of insecurity in school (Manga 2019).
- iii. Lack of comprehensive school security policy to guide action:** Many school administrator lack genuine school security plans that spell out what security tasks need to be performed, who to be held responsible, how the task should be carried out when it must be done and why it needs to be done.
- iv. Overcrowding of students with diverse characters in schools:** overcrowding students in school hostels, classrooms laboratories and vital places in schools could generate conflict in the use of limited resources which could disrupt peace and orderliness. Sometimes when student's misconduct is not promptly punished appropriately, it tends to embolden students to commit more crimes which in turn escalate to cause insecurity in schools (Akor et al 2022)
- v. Deficiencies in school plant construction and faulty building:** This may contribute to cause security problems in schools. The National Crime Prevention Center (NCPC 2001) stated that schools that are not fenced provide easy access to criminals and other trespassers while school building that are not constructed in line with standard specifications may soon collapse causing loss of lives and property.
- vi. Lack of permanent security guards in school:** Manga (2019) noted that inspite of the over increasing spate of school shootings around the world, many schools neither have full time security guards as their employees nor do they hire them for the school, where

- security guards exist, they are usually retired, old and physically weak men who lack the strength, agility and good eye-sight to perform security duties efficiently.
- vii. **Lack of security inspection by the ministry of Education:** Poor performance of security duties in schools is worsened by lack of regular security inspection of schools by the ministry of education.
 - viii. **Faulty school vehicles and reckless driving:** by school drivers within the school premises may at times result to accident which would in turn lead to injuries or loss of lives and damage to school buildings.
 - ix. **Poor governance, poverty :** In many instances, the rising incidents of violent attacks are symptoms of weak, exclusionary, or exploitative governance in Nigeria. Compounding factors include population explosion, a high poverty level and so on have made people vulnerable and willing to be involved in nefarious criminal activities.

Forms of insecurity in Nigerian educational system

Akor, Abubabar and Ogunode (2022) identified the following forms of insecurity in Nigerian educational system.

- a. **Physical violence, battery and assault:** This form of insecurity is very common in Africa where the use of corporal punishment is still popular especially in public schools. Nwobodo and Udenbunu (2012) explained that, a student in South Africa was whipped to the point of losing consciousness and another student punched in the face by a teacher.
- b. **Burning of schools or fire outbreaks:** This is one of the common attacks in north east by Boko Haram which has led to burning of many schools. In March 2013, unidentified attackers set fire to Gwange I primary school in Maiduguri city, Borno state, burning it down, unidentified attackers set fire to Gwange III primary school in the same city two days later, members of Boko Haram burned down three private schools in Biu town, Borno state at night.
- c. **Abduction and kidnapping of persons:** This is one of the most highly globally publicized attacks on education, occurred on April 14, 2014, when Boko Haram stormed a government- run secondary school for girls in the Chibok Local Government Area in Borno state (GCPEA). They burned down the school and kidnapped 276 female students. According to Sadig et al (2021), series of recent abductions of over 300 boys from the Secondary School in Kankara, Katsina State on December 11,2020, the 17th February abduction of 42 people including students, teachers and families from Government Science Technical School Kagara Niger State and that of Government Girls Secondary School Jagebe, Zamfara State on February 26, 2021 where 279 female students aged between 10 and 17 were taken away by bandits are still fresh in the memories of many.
- d. **False imprisonment and detention of students:** Unjustified detention of students by some wicked teachers or Senior Students especially in public boarding schools in Nigeria is a major source of violence in schools.
- e. **Armed robbery, stealing and trespassing:** it has also been reported that a school security guard was killed in cold blood by two rubbers who robbed in their school. A student also shot their school principal and injured a 12-year old student standing by him. (Manga 2019).
- f. **Burglary and vandalization of facilities:** This involves breaking down of doors or windows and destruction of school properties by students or others, especially during school riot/crisis or deliberate distraction by Boko Haram. For instance GCPEA (2020) stated that on September 7, 2014, Boko Haram members destroyed a school when they attacked Buratai town, Borno state. Furthermore, on 12th January 2015, Boko Haram

- members stormed Askira town Borno state, using explosive and incendiary devices to damage several buildings including a school.
- g. **Rape, sexual harassment and prostitution:** U.S Department of Education Office for CMI rights as cited on Akor et al (2022) defined sexual harassment as follows: Sexual harassment is unwelcomed conduct of a sexual nature, which can include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. These include conduct such as touching of a sexual nature, making sexual comments, jokes or gestures, writing graffiti or displaying or distributing sexually explicit drawings, pictures or written materials. Calling students sexually charged names. Spreading sexual rumors, rating students on sexual activity or performance or circulating, showing or creating e-mails or websites of a sexual nature. GCPEA found that armed forces law enforcement, other state security entities and non-state armed groups committed sexual violence during or in the aftermath of attacks on schools, primarily against female students and teachers (GCPEA, 2020)
 - h. **Bombings and school shootings:** On November 10, 2014, a suicide bomber student detonated a bomb during a school assembly at the Government Science and dressed as a Technical College in Potiskum, Yobe state. Akor et al (2022) reported that the explosion killed 26 students and inflicted minor to grave injuries on additional 81 students. In the same vein, on march 18 2013, unknown gunmen reported shot and killed at least three teachers and seriously injured three students in simultaneous attacks in four government run schools in Maiduguri, Borno state according to Amnesty international and Media sources as cited in GCPEA (2020).
 - i. **Vehicle collision and crashes:** This involves car accidents in schools which usually happen as result of careless and reckless driving by some nonchalant drivers within the school premises.
 - j. **Drug abuse, alcoholism and smoking:** smoking of Indian hemp, abusing other hard drugs, cult and related violent activities were some of the factors that constituted insecurity of the school environment which eventually cause boys to leave school and join trading while leading girls to drop out and settle for marriage (Ojukwu, 2017).
 - k. **Cultism and hooliganism:** Cultism can be seen as a ritual practice by group of people whose membership, admission, policy and initiation formalities as well as their mode of operation are kept secret and their activities affect a lot of people, cult activities influence students' discipline, punctuality and regularity to school programmes and their general academic participation and performance (Akor et al 2022).

Effects of Insecurity on Nigerian Educational System

In Nigeria, the effects of insecurity on education especially in the recent political upheavals have left theories to explore the area vigorously. The following are effects of insecurity on Nigerian educational system according to Akor et al (2022).

1. **Lack of manpower in educational institutions:** The administration of education institutions depends on the quality and quantities of professional teachers available. Insecurity in Nigeria is affecting the administration of educational institutions because many professional teachers have lost their lives due to the problem of insecurity in the country. This act has reduced the number of teachers for the effective administration of schools especially in the northern part of the country. Insecurity in Nigeria, particularly northern part of Nigeria is responsible for the death of professional teachers in Nigeria. Many professional teachers, school administrators and students have been killed because of insecurity in the country. 19,000 teachers have been displaced in the region, affecting access to education (Akor et al 2022).

2. **Poor Quality of Education:** One of the objectives of school administration is to ensure delivery of quality education in all education institutions. Insecurity in Nigeria is contributing to poor quality of education because, school scheme of work and syllabi are not covered in most educational institutions due to school closed down. Many educational institutions in the country are always been closed down due to insecurity. The inability of these educational institutions to cover their scheme of work and syllabus is reducing the quality of education.
3. **Destruction of infrastructural facilities:** Massive destruction of infrastructural facilities is another effect of insecurity in Nigeria. Availability of infrastructures helps in implementation of educational programmes, many school facilities like classrooms, administrative blocks, ICT facilities, tables, chairs and desks have been destroyed by insurgencies and Boko Haram members in the Northern part of the country. Boko Haram has destroyed nearly 1000 schools and displaced 19,000 teachers. Out of 260 school sites, 28% had been damaged by bullets, shellings or shrapnel, 20% had been deliberately set on fire, 32% had been looted and 29% had armed groups or military in close proximity. Between 2009 and 2015, attacks in North –Eastern Nigeria destroyed more than 910 schools and forced at least 1,500 to close down (Akor et al 2022).
4. **Closure of educational institutions:** The insecurity in Nigeria have led many states government order closure of all educational institutions in their states to prevent further attacks. Borno State ordered the closure of all educational institutions in the state because of insecurity. Schools at all levels have been closed in 22 out of 27 Local Government Areas in Borno State for at least two years, and public secondary schools in the state capital, Maidugiri, only reopened in February 2016 after internally displaced people or IDPS, who occupied most of the schools, were relocated elsewhere. Godwin and Akor et al (2022) noted that, concerns about the student's safety have prompted Governors of six state in the region- Niger, Kano, Katsina, Jigaua Zamfara and Sokoto as well as Yobe in the north East to shut some or all boarding schools, particularly in the most vulnerable Local Government Areas, until a semblance of security has been restored.
5. **Discouragement of educational pursuit by children:** One of the functions of school administration is to ensure effective student administration and enrolment but insecurity in the country is discouraging parents and children from coming to school because of the fear of being kidnapped or being killed by insurgents, many parents have decided to keep their children at home instead of being killed and kidnapped at schools where safety is not guarantee ins the face of security threats in Nigeria, parents consider pulling their children out of schools.
6. **Internal Displacement of learners:** Insecurity in Nigeria and especially in the Northern part of Nigeria is responsible for internal displacement of students. Many students have been displaced from their school because of insecurity. Insecurity is affecting student's administration in educational institutions across the country. Boko Haram whose name means "Western Education is forbidden" has made no secret of its strong opposition to education. Schools are often among the first targets when the terrorist group attacks communities. Ogunode, Godwin and Unoaku (2021) in Akor et al (2022), pointed out that the impact of insecurity include increase in the quantum of internally displaced persons. Political, social and economic disruptions and slow economic growth. All of the above impact negativity on the humans that occupy such locations are experiencing insecurity.
7. **Reduction in private investment in education:** Insecurity faced by the country is preventing investment in institutions in the country because such investment if

embarked upon will be destroyed by the insurgents attacking public and private educational institutions in the country. The government and some state governments have resolved not to embark in infrastructural development of educational institutions for now until the country the security issues are over. This action is preventing investment in education and many stakeholders in the private sector are discouraged from establishing private schools because of the fear of attacks.

8. Inadequate funding of education: This is linked to insecurity facing the country which demands huge funds that are supposed to be used for sectors like education and health. School administrations require a lot of financial commitment for effective implementation of the various educational policies and programmes. School administration is a very expensive project and it demands a lot of funds to secure the services of human resources and to procure the material resources for the implementation of educational programmes and policies. It is unfortunate that funds that are supposed to be allocated for the development of education are being used fearfully to tackle security challenges. Research has it that Nigerian government spends one trillion naira on security annually.

Implication for Counselling

Guidance and Counsellors are fundamental to students and the individuals in the society. Adikwu (2021) defined Guidance and Counselling as a process of helping individuals to understand themselves and their world. Guidance and Counseling are important component of educational service. It is desirable to provide Guidance and Counsellors in schools in Nigeria. The mandatory students Guidance and counseling services is to provide the true condition and situation in Nigeria, security issues inclusive. Counselling services guide, inform, direct and assist people in making choices, adjustment and solving of problem including how to overcome insecurity and ensure tranquility. According to Odemelan and Uwani (2009), the individual could be assisted to understand and ensure security in Nigeria:

- The guidance counselors should organize seminars and give security talks in the school and community creating awareness about the security challenges going on in our schools.
- Counselors should charge students and youth to be security conscious in the school environment and to avoid complacency in whatever they do so as not to be victim of any security challenges.
- Counselors can act as facilitators for Government sponsored enlightenment, workshops, seminars and initial gingles on radio and television, churches and mosques regarding the dangers of violence terrorism, kidnapping and evil effects of security breakdown.
- There should be counselling for risk vulnerable individual e.g rape –prone girl. Flyers containing hints for protection and safety can emanate from the counsellors office to enlighten the public.
- Assertive training skills techniques can be offered vulnerable students and teachers to help them fight their own gullibility and challenge the deceitful act of their assailants.
- Psychological assistance should be offered the victims of risk and insecurity to help restore their troubled emotional states. Through systematic desensitization the traumatic experience would be faded from their psyche.
- Information services is a vital tool that can make positive impact in tackling security issues in Nigerian schools. Through information service student's teachers and school administrators will be informed of the security trend in the society.

Conclusion

Insecurity and insurgency in Nigeria have taken a frightening dimension in which Schools and Colleges are worst hit. Parents are always apprehensive whenever their children are in school due to insecurity. This crisis requires swift and comprehensive action, both in prevention and supporting victims to minimize long term damages. Schools are only safe in so far as the large society is safe. Nigerian policy makers, school administrators and communities should effectively and creatively come together to help reverse the current economic and education dynamics to avoid a catastrophic collapse.

Recommendations

One of the major problems facing Nigerian Educational system is insecurity which has snowballed into kidnapping of students. Government should come up with strategies to end kidnapping and insecurity in schools.

1. Enough competent and well equipped security personnel should be engaged for schools.
2. All schools should be fenced to enhance security in schools.
3. The counselling unit of the schools should be well equipped and functional so as to attend to students' needs as and when due.
4. Government should promulgate laws that will stipulate death penalty for kidnappers. This will instill fear in the mind of potential kidnappers.
5. Necessary communication equipment and transport facilities should be made available for security personnels.
6. Government should also ensure that schools provide adequate security for students while there should be regular orientation on how students can stay safe from kidnappers.
7. Displaced students should be given sufficient opportunity to go on with their learning. Government must ensure that they continue their education.
8. Government should provide security gadgets in schools like cameras, hidden CCTVs, etc.

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