

SECURITY ISSUES AND THE NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: EFFECTS IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS AND WAYS FORWARD

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Abstract

Education in Nigeria comes with its fair share of challenges, but when students risk losing their freedom or lives at school, our tomorrow is under attack. This paper centers its discussion on the effects of security issues on Nigerian educational system. Secondary data were used to support the points raised in the paper. The data were sourced from printed materials and online publications by recognized institutions and individual authors. The paper identified Militancy in the Niger Delta Region, Clashes between Fulani herdsman and farmers, Ethnic conflicts, Religious conflicts, Cold war among ethnic nationalities, area boys syndrome, Gang conflicts and cult wars, Kidnapping, Robbery, Mob attack and lynching of suspected criminals, Ritual killings involving innocent people, Police brutality and Extra judicial killings as some of the security issues in Nigeria. The paper highlights, loss of manpower in educational institutions, poor quality of education, destruction of infrastructural facilities, brain-drain, closure of educational institutions, discouragement of educational pursue by children and reduction of private investment in education as the effects of security issues in the Nigerian educational system. Based on this, the paper recommended that the federal, state and local government should develop the political will to fight all forms of insecurity in the country, through the application of best strategies; direct Nigerian Police Force to establish a department for school security; deploy security personnel to guide all educational institutions in the country; employ every strategies to solve the problems of school attacks in Nigeria; address the problem of unemployment in the country and increase the number of security surveillance in every part of the country. Also, all school administrators should increase school security to the best of their capabilities.

Keywords: Security issues, Insecurity, Nigeria, Educational system, Government

Introduction

The deteriorating security situation in Nigeria is worrisome. Recently, Nigeria has witnessed an unprecedented level of insecurity ranging from intra-communal, inter-communal and inter-ethnic clashes; religious violence; armed robbery; assassination, kidnapping and “boko haram” insurgency (Mutillullah cited in Abubakar, 2011). Insecurity in Nigeria is causing developmental challenges such as endemic penury, high rate of unemployment, inured corruption, low industrial output, unstable and deteriorating exchange rate, high

inflation rate, inadequate physical and social infrastructure, large domestic debt, and rising external debt.

Insecurity have been defined by different scholars. according to Achumba, Ighomereho & Akpor-robaro, (2013) insecurity is the antithesis of security and has attracted such common descriptors as want of safety, danger, hazard, uncertainty, want of confidence, state of doubt, inadequately guarded or protected, instability, trouble, lack of protection and being unsafe. Oluyomi, & Grace, (2016) see insecurity as concerned with feelings of uncertainty, dangers or threats to life while Hassan (2014), viewed insecurity as a negative feeling involving fear, anxiety, uncertainty and injustice, among others. When an individual does not have control over a situation but has to rely on the cooperation of others that cannot be guaranteed, the result may be frustration or insecurity. Insecurity is a threat to learning. Prevailing peace or conflict within communities around the schools often has ripple effects on the teaching and learning activities of such schools.

The importance of education has been adequately discussed in many fora and in different literature (Nwanne Nzewunwa, 2009; Ojukwu & Nwanma, 2015 and Ojukwu & Onuoha, 2016; Osanti, 2012). It is in the realization of the importance of education of a child that the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in its 1999 constitution made a declaration of the right of every Nigerian child to education, irrespective of gender, tribe, religion, or race. It makes sense to state that the lofty vision of education as enunciated in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria would be realized in a serene and conducive school environment. According to Lehr (2014), the noble goals of education can never be achieved in a vacuum. They would be achieved in a conducive and peaceful school environment. If there is a feeling of insecurity within and outside the school environment, both students and teachers are likely to be deterred and this may inhibit the academic performance of the students.

According to Akintunde & Musa (2016), an insecure school environment affect the learning of children. Situations of insecurity trigger traumatic disorder and toxic stress that affect learning negatively. General school attendance and enrolment are equally affected as parents pull their children out of schools while in some extreme cases, insecurity has led to the closure of schools. For instance, Borno State schools were shut-down in major towns as a result of insurgency (Ameh, 2015). These attacks on schools usually lead to vandalization and outright destruction of school facilities which discourage the establishment of new schools. Consequently, government resources are depleted as funds meant for other developmental projects are channeled to tackling the aftermath of attacks. In the end, educational attainment in terms of quality of graduates and manpower suffers which impinges on overall national development aspirations

Given the importance of education and human capital towards sustainable socio-economic development, there is the need to deploy extraordinary measures to tackle the spate of attacks on school facilities in Nigeria.

Concept of insecurity in Nigerian schools

For Beland (2005), insecurity is “the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection. It refers to lack or inadequate freedom from danger. This definition reflects physical insecurity which is the most visible form of insecurity, and it feeds into many other forms of insecurity such as economic security and social security. Insecurity is conceived as a situation where human and national security of a state is compromised by internal or external forces or interest exacerbated by the former’s weak or poor economic, military and/or human resource development conditions (Onifade, Imhonopi, & Urim, M 2013). Best (2006) defined insecurity as degenerated stage of conflict, threats to human security,

intense violence characterized by fighting death, injury, etc., occurs. Olamosu (2000), viewed insecurity as a state or condition in the life of a social unit, system, organization or society in which the existence of a problem assumes critical dimension to the extent that the survival or existence of the social system or structure is threatened.

From the above definition, insecurity can be summed to mean the state of been afraid of attack from any part of the environment. There are many factors responsible for the insecurity in Nigeria. Some of the factors includes; unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, marginalization, political factor, international influence communal crisis etc. There are many forms of insecurity in Nigeria. Oluwa (2014) in Bassey (2016) listed the following as types of insecurity in Nigeria which include: Militancy in the Niger Delta Region, Clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers, Ethnic conflicts, Religious conflicts, Cold war among ethnic nationalities, area boys syndrome, Gang conflicts and cult wars, Kidnapping, Robbery, Mob attack and lynching of suspected criminals (an act which could be Premeditated), Ritual killings involving innocent people, Police brutality and Extra judicial killings.

Nigerian educational institutions are the most affected institutions in recent times. Nnamdi (2021), outlined reasons why educational institutions is been attacked by insurgents. For one, schools are soft targets. They often have weak security, with few or no fences, and guards are few and poorly trained. State and Federal security forces are unlikely to be an impediment, as they are stretched woefully across the length and breadth of the country. Secondly, mass abductions of children is an issue that require public outrage, than kidnapping adult villagers or travelers on highways. The media glare forces the government almost immediately into negotiations and may result in quicker government concessions to speed up the children's release. Thirdly, kidnappers appear to be highly motivated by the concessions they can extract in exchange for releasing abductees, although state and federal officials have repeatedly denied making any. Hard evidence remains slim, but there have been several reports since the Chibok case in 2014 of governments paying ransom, releasing armed group members from detention or agreeing to halt military operations.

Effects of insecurity in Nigerian schools

The effects of insecurity on the Nigerian educational institutions includes loss of manpower in infrastructural facilities, brain-drain, closure of educational institutions, educational wastages, and discouragement of educational pursue by children and encouragement of foreign education and internal displacement of Learners.

1. Loss of Manpower in Educational Institutions

Nigerian educational institutions depends on the quality and quantities of professional teachers available. Insecurity in Nigeria is affecting educational institution 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 effective learning to take place in school especially in the Northern part of the country. Insecurity in Nigeria, particularly in Northern part of Nigeria is responsible for the death of professional teachers in the Nigeria. Many professional teachers, school administrators and students have been killed because of insecurity in the country.

According to The cable (2019) citing the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) says Boko Haram has killed 2,300 teachers in Nigeria's North-East since the start of the insurgency in 2009. The implication of this is that, the quality of education will reduce since the educational sector will be faced with the problem of inadequate professional teachers.

2. Poor Quality of Education

One of the objectives of schools is to ensure delivery of quality education in all educational institutions. Insecurity in Nigeria is contributing to poor quality education because school scheme of work and syllables are not covered in most educational institutions due to school closure. 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 syllable is reducing the quality of education. For instance, the entire educational institutions in Borno, Kaduna and Kano State were closed down because of insecurity, many students were forced to go home and teaching and learning stopped. Upon resumption, the students were asked to start their examinations. Insecurity, forces students to graduate without completion of scheme of work and then move over to the next class without covering the stipulated scheme of work and this situation breeds poor quality of education.

Some schools are not closed down by government but end up churning out half-baked graduates as a result of insecurity. Schools are not able to spend stipulated number of months per term. Schools in unsafe areas and lack adequate qualified teachers. As such, students are not properly taught (Oluyomi, & Grace, 2016).

3. Destructions of Infrastructural Facilities

Another effect of insecurity on education in Nigeria is the massive destruction of infrastructural facilities. School administration depends on the availability of infrastructural facilities to implement educational programmes. Many school facilities like classrooms, administrative block, ICT facilities, tables, chairs and desks have been destroyed by insurgencies and Boko Haram members in the Northern part of the country. Human right watch (2016) reported that "Boko Haram has destroyed nearly 1,000 schools and displaced 19,000 teachers. "The Education Needs Assessment found that out of 260 school sites, 28% had been damaged by bullets, shelling's of shrapnel, 20% had been deliberately set on fire, 32% had been looted and 29% had armed groups of 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 (HRW,2016). School buildings and facilities are destroyed during insurgency or crises. Many secondary schools have been burnt down by insurgents. School facilities become inadequate (Oluyomi, & Grace, 2016).

4. Brain-Drain

Administration of school is impossible without adequate manpower to man the classrooms and to carry out other academic services within the schools. The insecurity in Nigeria and especially in the Northern Nigeria is causing mass movement of professional teachers from one state to another, leaving many educational institutions without teachers. Many teachers and lecturers are resigning their appointments due to insecurity in Northern Nigeria. The implication of this mass migration of teachers from this region is that, less teachers will be available to teach and this will affect the quality of education because, there will be inadequate professional teachers to attend to the students.

5. Closure of Educational Institutions

The insecurity in Nigeria have led many state government, to 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. Human Right Watch (2016) submitted that in Borno, one of the most affected states, schools at AL displaced people, or IDPs, who occupied most of the schools, were relocated elsewhere. The crisis caused by the Boko Haram insurgency in north-East Nigeria means that over 57 per cent of school in Borno, the worst-hit state, are closed, even as the new school year begins (UNICEF, 2017). More states in Northern Nigeria ordered all schools to close following kidnapping of hundreds of pupils in Katsina State as reported by (BB.C, 2020). The implication of school closure on students is

that, it will affect the quality of education. Scheme of works and syllable meant to be covered are not covered due to the insecurity and school closure. Government had to close down many secondary schools in crises-prone areas for several months. Timothy (2021) submits that since the recent wave of kidnappings by criminal gangs demanding ransom, many state authorities, including those in Kano, Yobe, Niger, and Zamfara, have ordered the closure of boarding schools. Nnamdi (2021) noted that, concerns about the students' safety have prompted governors of six states in the region – Niger, Kano, Katsina, Jigawa 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. Nigeria Union of Teachers spokesperson Emmanuel Hwande says the closures will have consequences. "It will disrupt the free flow of academic calendar, the flow of the children's education pursuit. It will subject the children to trauma," he said. UNICEF says the closing down of schools is not the best approach (Timothy, 2021).

6. Discouragement of Educational Pursuit by Children

Insecurity in the country is discouraging parents and children from coming to attending because of fear of been kidnapped or been killed by insurgence. Attacks on educational institutions in Nigeria is discouraging parents and students from going to schools especially in Northern Nigeria. Many parents have decided to keep their children at home instead of been killed and kidnapped at schools where safety is not guaranteed. In the face of security threats in Nigeria, parents consider pulling their children out of schools. Timothy (2021) observed that UNICEF say the recent spate of abductions is having a huge negative impact on education in Nigeria. "At a time when the pandemic is rife, and some parents have withdrawn their children from school, or have not sent their children back to school, the insecurity and threats to educational facilities can only compound an already difficult situation," said Peter Hawkins, UNICEF Nigeria country representative. While Nnamdi (2021) observed that the attacks could curtail attendance once school reopen. Already, many parents say they no longer consider schools safe. Many Muslim parents in the North West are skeptical of what they perceive as a Western model of education; it is likely that some won't allow their children to return. Moreover, given the wide spread of insecurity in the region, the abductions could prompt teachers and other staff to quit and seek employment elsewhere.

7. Reduction of Private Investment in Education

Insecurity faced by the country is preventing investments in the development of educational institutions in the country because, such investment if embarked upon may be destroyed by the insurgency. This actions is preventing investment in education and many private sectors too are discourage on establishing private schools because of the fear of attacks. Oluyomi, & Grace (2016), submitted that the Child's learning is affected in that he/she has limited number of schools to choose from. Government and private owners are unable to open new schools. A child that has flare for technical training may not get such a school to attend as proprietors are scared of establishing new schools in crises-prone areas.

Conclusion

The paper concluded that insecurity have affected the entire educational institutions in Nigeria. The paper identified loss of manpower in educational institutions, poor quality of education, destruction of infrastructural facilities, brain-drain, closure of educational institutions, discouragement of educational pursue by children, internal displacement of learners, reduction of private investment in education and inadequate funding of education as the effect of insecurity in Nigerian educational institutions.

Ways forward

To solve the identified problems, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The government should develop the political will to fight all forms of insecurity in the country through the application of best strategies.
- ii. The Federal Government should deploy security personnel to guide all educational institutions in the country. The government should increase the level of its security through employing dedicated and intelligent security personnel.
- iii. The Nigerian government should direct Nigerian Police Force to establish a department for school security. The department should be saddled with the responsibility of providing security to all educational institutions in the country.
- iv. The Nigerian government should direct the Nigerian security and civil defense to establish department of forest security. This department will prevent the kidnappers from using forest for kidnapping activities and hide-out.
- v. The government should employ the engagement and negotiation strategies to free the students in the hands of the kidnappers to engage the bandits and other criminal element in the country.
- vi. Government should employ every strategies to solve the problems of school attacks in Nigeria by addressing the problem of unemployment in the country and increasing the number of security surveillance in every part of the country.
- vii. All school administrators should increase school security to the best of their capabilities.

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