INSECURITY IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS: THE QUEST FOR A LASTING SOLUTION

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ABSTRACT
Nigeria is facing a myriad of security challenges that are threatening her institutional efficiency, socio-political stability and economic development. However, insecurity issues are global concerns which are not limited to a particular country. Though, Nigeria also has her fair share of the problem due to the fact that she is being overwhelmed by series of terror attacks and other forms of insecurity for over a decade which has led to the clarion call for a long-term solution by the citizens and other stakeholders to the government. These attacks on government infrastructures, humans and institutions including religious houses seemed unabating whereas they have direct and indirect consequences on the citizens, institutions, political environment and the economy. Insecurity is a situation where safety or protection of lives and properties are lacking or uncertain while the people are being subjected to anxiety, fear, injury, danger, or worry as it adversely affects meaningful development of any kind in all areas of human endeavour. On the opposite side of it, security is a state that guarantees protection from all threats by consciously establishing secured structures or programmes that ensure the trust of the public. This study examines insecurity in Nigerian schools highlighting the causes, consequences and likely solutions. It discussed further the concept of insecurity, school safety, forms of insecurity in the Nigerian schools, theoretical framework on security, factors that contributes to schools' insecurity, consequences of insecurity on the Nigerian school system, and lasting solutions to insecurity in Nigerian schools. The study argued that insecurity has adversely affected many schools, lives

and properties by way of depriving these institutions from achieving the intended educational goals and has negatively impacted the quality of teaching and research in all levels of education especially the tertiary institutions. The paper was anchored on the Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory propounded by Abraham Maslow. The study concluded that the duty of securing lives and properties rests on every individual in the society and the government to the extent that the cooperation of all and sundry is needed to have a safe society where all sectors of the economy including education can thrive. It also added that the absence of a comprehensive approach to solving insecurity issues will make many Nigerian schools to be vulnerable to series of attack. This study recommended a whole society approach to fight against insecurity where everybody in the community or society is a stakeholder. All the three tiers of government should work assiduously to ensure that all the schools in their domains or areas of jurisdiction are well protected. Security agents should address all issues causing insecurity in all the regions of the country without fear or bias while the government should continue to invest bountifully on the security sector.

Introduction

The quality of education cannot improve in the environment endangered with surges of attack or threat. It is imperative to note that there can no meaningful development in the absence of peace and security in the education sector of the economy. Security of lives and properties is an issue of great concern to all sane humans, societies and even nations in any part of the world. Insecurity refers to the absence of protection from attacks or threats whereas security means the state of being free from danger, hazards or threats. It is a fact that there is no country in the world today that is completely free from danger or some forms of threat. Although, the security situations vary across regions and governments as some countries may appear more peaceful or stable than others. It is saddening that schools have turned to target of attack by the criminal elements as Abubakar, Otakey, Umar, Fulani, & Isah (2023) submitted that the menace has a detrimental effect on the basic educational institutions which are frequently the target of criminal elements.

Insecurity has become a major problem faced by humans on earth today. For example, Nigeria has become one of the hubs of insecurity due to the activities of bandits (banditry), terrorism by the boko haram sect, kidnapping, herdsmen-farmers' clash, youth restiveness, ritual killings and militancy to mention but a few. Insecurity has direct and indirect consequences on the education sector. In Nigeria, insecurity has grown to become a serious threat to peaceful coexistence of the citizens in all the federating units, states or geo-political zones. The instance of cultism, banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery, herder attacks, and other social vices have adversely affected employees and students at various educational levels. In an effort to identify the reasons for these ongoing and unsettling national disturbances, various researchers, scholars, intellectuals and security experts have put forward different ideas as to what is causing these dreadful national disturbances as well as suggested ways out the quagmire bedeviling the nation as a whole. Psychologically, Nigerians are being crushed and overwhelmed beyond the ability to endure pains and worries which has prompted and provoked the citizenry to think that they would never live through this ugly situation while putting up the clarion calls for a lasting solution. Over the years, there has been spate of attacks on the members of staff, students and properties of different educational institutions across Nigeria. For example, the case of abducted Chibok girls from their school in Borno state had devastating effects on the

immediate community, victims and their parents which have proven to be very difficult to remedy. However, these attacks or threats are manifested in the form of kidnapping of students, teachers, non-teaching members of staff or other stakeholders as well as destruction of school properties or infrastructures and cult clashes in the tertiary institutions to mention but a few. This fact is corroborated by Ogunode, Ukozor & Ayoko (2023) which asserted that insecurity issues have resulted in a decreased funding for higher education, the deaths of students and staff members, as well as the destruction of infrastructural facilities and equipment in Nigeria.

It is sad to note that as a result of high rate of crimes that fueled insecurity, many Nigerian schools (primary schools, secondary schools and the tertiary institutions) are still suffering from these disturbances without any hope of abating them in the nearest future irrespective of government efforts and commitments. Hence the citizens and other stakeholders are continuously making clarion calls for lasting solutions to the menace.

Conceptual Clarifications

i. Insecurity

Insecurity simply means the situation where lives and properties are not safe thereby making people to live in fear. Manga (2019) sees insecurity as a condition of fear of imminent danger and real experience of harmful activities that cause properties and human destruction. Moreover, Insecurity refers to a state of being endangered or lack of proper security measures in place. (Paul (2015) described insecurity as the state of being subject to danger or injury, anxiety, fear, worry, uncertainty, unsureness etc. Also Insecurity encompasses both the actual lack of protection and the subjective feeling of fear (Beland 2005).

In this paper, insecurity is operationalized to be a situation where safety and protection of lives and properties are lacking or uncertain while people are being subjected to anxiety, fear, injury, danger, or worry as it adversely affects meaningful development of any kind in all areas of human endeavour. On the opposite side, security can be described as a state that guarantees protection from all threats by consciously establishing secure structures or programmes that ensure the trust of the public.

ii. School Safety.

School safety is simply the opposite of school insecurity. A situation when students (or pupils), teachers and non-teaching staff members are protected against any form of intimidation, violence, bullying, harassment, attack and the effects of substance use in schools and school-related activities is known as school safety. It is the ideal way to go in educational planning and administration in all the levels of educational institutions. According to World Bank group (2022), schools are safe when all students, teachers, and staff can thrive in a welcoming environment that supports learning, health and well-being, and positive relationships. Promoting school safety should consider the physical and remote spaces in which education takes place as well as the non-physical aspects of the school environment, such as norms and values. In the consideration of physical safety of the school system, it has to do with safety from risks that can cause bodily harm in school or on the way to and from school, for example, from aggression, including acts of physical or sexual violence and abuse; the school physical infrastructure; or health conditions/diseases such as those that stem from poor nutrition, contaminated water, and inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services. In terms of mental health and well-being, school safety talks about avoidance of negative stress, anxiety, despair, and other unpleasant thoughts and emotions; and defense against psychological aggression, such as hostile, harassing, disruptive, and other emotionally damaging behaviors and activities by students, instructors, and school personnel.

Security of lives, properties and the environments is of great concern to the individuals and government. Mubita (2022) emphasized that educational environments must be safe and possess secure spaces for learners, teachers, non-teaching staff and the local community. Also the provision of a safe and secure environment at school is imperative to helping learners succeed academically, socially and emotionally which encompasses the attainment of the educational goals of concerned institutions.

Moreover, security of lives and properties are also put into consideration in the design and construction of school buildings and other educational infrastructures. Kaidanovska and Dumnych (2023) established that the creation of a safe learning environment is an important area

of architectural science and practice as well as the educational environment of a school should consider security requirements. This lend credence to the fact that most incidents of collapsed buildings that have taken place in Nigeria could be attributed to faulty designs from the architectural planning stages which were not given much needed attention that would have averted such unwanted life-threatening occurrences.

iii. Forms of Insecurity in the Nigerian Schools.

Insecurity, being one of the major challenges facing the education sector in most Nigerian schools likely manifests in the form fighting among cult groups, bullying, assault, destruction of school properties, banditry, kidnapping of students or teachers, and stealing (theft) of school properties to mention but a few. However, Umar (2022) identified cultism, violence, armed robbery, sexual harassment, abduction and kidnapping as forms of insecurity in educational institutions in Nigeria. All these forms have adverse effects on the development of education in Nigeria.

Furthermore, Akor, Abubakar and Ogunode (2021) identified physical violence, battery and assault, burning of schools or fire outbreaks, abduction and kidnapping of persons, false imprisonment and detention of students, armed robbery, stealing and trespassing, burglary and vandalism, rape, sexual harassment and prostitution, bombings and school shootings, etc. as some of the forms of insecurity found in educational system. In fact, the list seems unending.

Theoretical framework

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory served as the theoretical foundation for this paper. According to the belief, if man is to live and reach self-actualization, he must have safety and security needs. Given Nigeria's worsening level of insecurity nationwide, it is clear that Maslow's ideas which placed a strong focus on the need for safety and security seemed indispensable. Practically, the level of the security of lives and properties that is offered in most Nigerian schools is significantly low. Many schools in this country have done little or nothing to strengthen their internal security and support the work of state security services, despite the swift spread of armed robbery, terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, occultism and other security issues.

The safety needs of humans in any society or organisation cannot be overemphasized, hence McLeod (2024) reiterated Maslow's argument that survival needs (safety needs inclusive) must be satisfied before the individual can satisfy the higher needs. Safety need in this case means the need for security and protection such as being safe from harm or attack, occupational safety, financial security, job security, health and wellbeing, etc.

The figure 1 below shows the pictorial view of the Maslow's hierarchy of needs. In the hierarchy, it demonstrated that Safety, Protection and Security need which is the second level of needs after physiological needs (first level of needs) are very important for the survival of human beings in any society we found themselves.

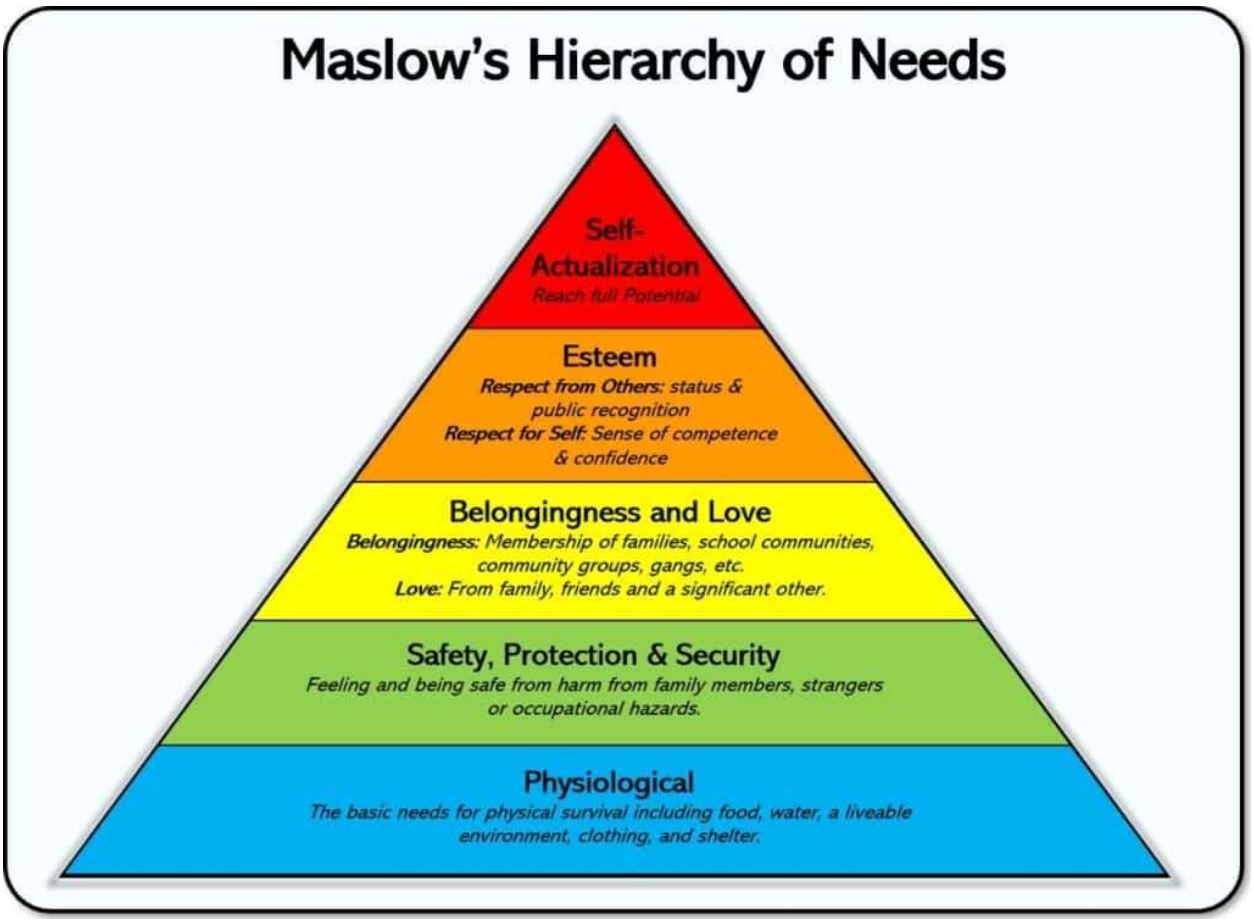


Fig. 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Factors that contribute to Schools Insecurity in Nigeria.

Research has shown that among the elements contributing to insecurity in our schools are the schools' casual attitude toward security, their porous nature, their inept and untrained security personnel, their incomplete security strategy, their lack of awareness and manpower, and their soft target status. However, Udo (2015) emphasized that many people believed that insecurity and its factors are direct consequences of bad leadership, poverty, unemployment, widespread illiteracy and extreme deprivation.

There are a number of factors that has contributed to insecurity issues in the Nigerian schools. A few of them are religious extremism, absence of a comprehensive security policy, political factors, international undue influences (neo-colonialism and imperialism), incompetent security personnel, inter-ethnic or communal crises, Etc. However, Manga (2019) has identified causes of insecurity in Nigerian education system as nonchalant attitude of school administrators on security matters; Lack of comprehensive school security policy to guide action; Non execution of security duties by incompetent guards: Overcrowding of students with diverse characters in schools; Efficiencies in school plant construction and faulty buildings; Lack of permanent security guards in schools; Lack of security inspection by the Ministry of Education and Faulty school vehicles and reckless driving. Meanwhile, Manga (2021) also confirmed that a number of factors that contributed to school insecurity, included the careless attitude of certain administrators toward security issues, the absence of a thorough and widely publicized school security policy, and the inability of school security guards to carry out their duties.

Moreover, poverty, unemployment and illiteracy are the major causes of insecurity in Nigeria especially in the north east and south

east of Nigeria (Adeodu, Ademola and Babafemi 2024). Nevertheless, the study conducted by Abubakar, Otakey, Shafiu, Umar, Fulani, and Isah (2022) identified the causes of insecurity in Nigerian schools as lack of awareness and manpower; a porous school; incompetent and unskilled guards; a lack of comprehensive security policy; and the schools' casual attitude toward security. They also found that some of the reasons for Nigeria's insecurity include poverty, terrorism, injustice, illiteracy, and foreign influence.

Consequences of Insecurity on the Nigerian School System

All forms of school insecurity pose serious security challenges to the teaching and learning process in the institutions. Insecurity in Nigeria has affected all sectors of the economy including the education sector in which it had many negative effects on the schools. Umar (2022) confirmed that school drop-outs, poor academic performance, loss of school resources and fear in students, teachers and parent are consequences of insecurity in Nigerian educational institutions. However, the International Organization for Peace Building and Social Justice (2024) reported among others that numerous attacks are forcing schools around the country to shut down thereby depriving many children of the opportunity to go to school. With fifteen percent (15%) of the world's total out-of-school children, Nigeria currently has one of the largest populations in the world in which there are staggering 1.6 million out-of-school children in the Northeast alone.

Without doubt, insecurity have meted devastating effects on the Nigerian schools at all levels which would be difficult for some of them to recover from. In the light these facts, Oguniyi, Ahaotu and Obi-Ezenekwe (2021) enumerated the effects of insecurity on school administration in Nigeria to include brain drain, closure of educational institutions, loss of personnel in educational institutions, poor quality of education, destruction of infrastructure, internal displacement of learners, reduction of private investment in education, and inadequate funding of education.

More so, Uzuegbu-Wilson (2019) posited that in the past ten years, safe schools in Nigeria have faced security challenges which is due to terrorist attacks on educational institutions that have destroyed school property, kidnapped teachers and students, forced schools to close down, and caused a rise in internal displacement in areas where security is a concern.

Furthermore, insecurity has devastating consequences on the Nigerian school system in all ramifications. Akor, Abubakar and Ogunode (2021) identified loss of manpower in educational institutions, poor quality of education, destruction of infrastructural facilities, and discouragement of educational pursuit by children, resort to foreign education and internal displacement of learners among others as some of the consequences of insecurity on Nigerian educational system in Nigeria. However, according to Abubakar et al (2022), among the detrimental effects of insecurity on schools in Nigeria were low enrollment, death, interruption of the academic programmes, and damage to the physical infrastructure of the schools.

Roles of Nigerian Security Agencies to Combatting Insecurity in Nigerian Schools

All the established security agencies are expected to work in synergy to protecting lives and properties. The Military (army, navy and air force), Nigeria Police Force, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), State Security Service (SSS) and Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) are players in the protection of critical national assets and infrastructures as well as managing internal security and fostering community engagement cutting across all the sectors of the economy.

Specifically, to protect Nigerian schools and their properties, the security agents are duty-bound to do the needful. For example, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) through the National Safe Schools Response Coordination Centre (NSSRCC) established in 2022 and charged with the responsibility to provide adequate security to all levels of schools in the country, including the host communities of the schools. Additionally, the centre is expected to enhance security for schools and host communities by coordinating with security agencies and stakeholders, receiving and referring complaints, and maintaining emergency hotlines. The Centre will formulate and implement safety and security training, maintain a standby force for quick response to emergencies, and engage with organizations for support. It is also expected to conduct security

vulnerability surveys, maintain a security ecosystem map, and share intelligence and situational reports with relevant agencies and the Office of the National Security Adviser.

Peterside (2014) submitted that despite the fact that the 1999 Nigerian Constitution explicitly stated in section 217 that the military's duties include "defending Nigeria from external aggression, maintaining its territorial integrity and securing its borders from isolation on land, sea, or air, suppressing insurrection and acting in aid of civil authorities to restore order when called upon to do so by the President but subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by an Act of National Assembly," the rise in insecurity issues in Nigeria, including communal/ethnic clashes, religious conflicts, and most recently, acts of terrorism, have made the military's involvement in internal security operations necessary. These operations are being expected to be extended to schools to ensure safe schools in all the states of the federation.

Regrettably, Uzuegbu-Wilson (2019) emphasized that the roles and responsibilities of law enforcement agencies are however being hampered by large “ungoverned space” which Boko Haram insurgents’ group and other criminal groups take advantage off in perpetrating various crimes and criminality. Besides the lack of Biometrics data and ICT driven security architecture have also hindered the effort of law enforcement agencies in Nigeria to tackle insecurity as expected.

Lasting Solutions to Insecurity in Nigerian Schools

Varieties of workable approaches can be adopted to counter all forms of insecurity depending on their nature, topography of the environment, causes and sponsors to mention but a few. Nevertheless, in the tackling of insecurity, Nigerian administrations past and present have used a variety of strategies such as the military approach, the economic explanation approach, and the amnesty or "carrot" strategy. However, Atai, , Esetang, Atai, and Itina, (2024) suggested the combination of the Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp Approach, the America-Mexico Border Wall Approach, the China Population Growth Control Approach, and the Compulsory and Free Education Approach in order to address the security drift, taking into account the shortcomings of the current strategies.

In as much as remedy to insecurity challenges is not just one approach but diversified strategies are encouraged and embraced. Adeodu, Ademola and Babafemi (2024) in their study also emphasized that eradication of poverty, provision of better job, and free education at all levels will reduce insecurity to the barest minimum. In addition to all aforementioned solutions, Zubaru (2020) stated that the threats of poverty and unemployment, elite exploitation of racial and religious distinctions, corruption, a shoddy security system, a porous border, national inequality and marginalization, and inadequate leadership and governance are the main drivers of insecurity. The solutions consist of combating the reasons of insecurity listed above.

Furthermore, to cushion the effects of insecurity on the Nigerian school system, certain long-term strategies could be adopted such as provision of CCTV in the school environment; Provision and training of adequate security personnel as well as equipping them with the right tools that conform with the digital era to work with and adoption of Public-Private partnership arrangement to foot the bills of securing the school staff, students or pupils, properties etc. In the. light of the foregoing, Umar (2022) emphasized on training security personnel to make them brave as well as face any security challenge in schools while government should recruit sufficient security personnel in the country with electronic based security gadgets for easy access and detection of criminals in society. Meanwhile, Olanipekun, Usman, Garuba and Mohammed (2024) unraveled some potential answers to Nigeria's current security issues, such as using a variety of ICT technologies to fight insecurity, such as cell phones, CCTV, and biometric data mining, to stop the insurgency and other criminal activities.

Additionally, this era of digital transformation has attracted and embraced high-powered technology to solve problems. Given the challenges facing the nation's security force, it is now imperative to employ technological devices, such as drones alongside vehicular patrols to complement and enhance more efficient monitoring and surveillance operations for the prevention and control of crimes across all the schools in Nigeria. The instance of drones utilization has been very effective in tackling the challenges of insecurity being in agreement with the findings of Emmanuel (2024) which revealed that drones have significant impact in the prevention of kidnappings, armed robbery,

communal killings and other crimes in Nigeria. As part of the solutions to insecurity issues, it is also expected that teachers, students, and security staff members are trained on safety, emergency responses and security awareness using modern technologies.

Discussions

From the foregoing, it clearly revealed that insecurity in Nigeria has adversely affected many schools by way of depriving them from achieving the intended educational goals. Also, insecurity has significantly impacted the quality of teaching and research in all levels of education including the tertiary institutions which aligned with the findings of Oweikpodor (2024) as it revealed that the ongoing insecurities have led to the suspension of research programs, as institutions struggle to maintain normal operations amid threats and disturbances. However, it is acknowledged that the establishment or installation of high-powered security personnel or equipment may create anxiety or fear among students in the schools, but it is believed that adequate communication and student-friendly approaches that would ensure that the security measures put in place make the students to feel safe and not scared nor worried.

Conclusion

Insecurity as a threat to any form of development with its severe consequences is being borne by mankind. Though, it is unwanted but it will continue to have its way by force due to weak government institutions if not nipped in the bud. It should be noted that the duty of securing lives and properties rests on every individual in the society and the government. That means the cooperation of all and sundry is needed to have a safe society where all sectors of the economy including education can thrive. It is impossible to overstate the complementing roles played by the government, security agencies, international organizations, local vigilante groups, and private security firms in the overall endeavour to reverse the security risks to schools. As a result, stronger stakeholder commitments are needed to advance policies and save school initiatives towards ensuring the attainment of the goals of education in enabling environments devoid of threats irrespective of the location, terrain or topography of the learning environment. In all these approaches, we should be mindful of the fact, that in the absence of a comprehensive approach to solving insecurity issues, many Nigerian schools will continue to be vulnerable to series of attack. It is quite imperative that all stakeholders must prioritize and finance the proposed and efficacious strategies required to tackle school insecurity issues.

Recommendations

In the light of the foregoing, the following recommendations were made:

i. There should be whole society approach to fight against insecurity where everybody in the community or society is a stakeholder.

ii. All the three tiers of government (Federal, state and local government) should work assiduously to ensure that all the schools in their domains or areas of jurisdiction are well protected.

iii. Security agents and other security bodies should address all issues causing insecurity in all the regions of the country.

iv. The government should invest bountifully in the security sector as well as monitor and evaluate its progress.

v. There is the need for schools' authorities and their stakeholders to work closely with law enforcement agents such as Nigeria armed forces, Nigeria Police Force, Nigeria Civil Defence Corps as well as local security outfits such as vigilante, hunters etc.

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