

Managing School Safety in Nigeria in the 21st Century: The Need for a Balanced Approach

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Abstract

The issues of school safety and security have become a global matter in this time of intercontinental unrest. Nigeria and numerous other nations worldwide have recently encountered threats to life and property that have grown so severe that action is now required to combat them. The paper examined the concept of safety and security, discussing briefly various security challenges common to schools in Nigeria as a nation in the 21st century. The paper further prescribes various ways forward as it x-rays different forms in which such challenges have affected educational institutions. The paper suggested, among others, the adoption of hybrid security measures and the full involvement of school stakeholders in ensuring the security of the lives of students, teachers, and non-teaching staff in schools in Nigeria.

Keywords: School security, safety, Nigeria, management, 21st century.

Introduction

Schools are naturally designed to be a citadel of teaching and learning where whoever passes through it should be distinguished in society. Similarly, schools are meant to be places that are free from both psychological and physical attacks. Schools should also be places where refuge can be sought. Unfortunately, the reverse is now the case because attacks on schools are a common occurrence in the modern era. Uzuegbu-Wilson, (2019) submitted that the severe security issues that jeopardize the security and unity of the Nigerian state, in general, do not exclude attacks on schools. However, the causes of the attacks are not well understood (Alimba, 2018). Due to the insurgency of Boko Haram, 22 of Borno State's 27 local government areas had no formal education in place by 2013. In 2014, there were no functioning schools in 2 out of 3 educational zones in Yobe State and 7 out of the 21 local government areas in Adamawa State. In Yobe State, all schools have moved to Damaturu, the state capital. Attacks by Boko Haram in Adamawa State resulted in the closure of 115 schools in 8 local government areas, displacing 285,632 students and 8,150 staff.

Furthermore, the attack is not limited to schools, religious centres (mosques and churches), embassies, cultural centres and many more in Nigeria have continuously been threatened by the state of insecurity of the nation. For instance, Kpee and Osiobe (2014) reported that the bombings of the Mogadishu Barrack in Abuja in December 2010,

the police headquarters in Abuja in June 2011, the UN House in Abuja in August 2011, the Catholic church in Suleja, as well as various other buildings and institutions, have all been blamed on Boko Haram.

Also, the schools are facing the challenge of laboratory equipment, bullying, rape, students' unrest and suicidal ideation. To get rid of these, a school safety manual was created by the International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization as part of the Teacher Training and Development for Peace-building in the Horn of Africa and Surrounding Countries (UNESCO-IICBA, 2017). This project aimed to familiarize teachers with the knowledge and abilities required for the establishment, upkeep, and maintenance of fundamental school safety. Mubita (2018) explained that this guidebook primarily serves as a guide for teachers about school safety. Despite the efforts of government at all levels to make schools a safe haven, day-in day-out, different kinds of attacks are witness. This is to the extent that lives of teachers, students, and other personnel are recorded.

Research investigations have discovered some variables that change depending on the location. Typically, school attacks result in the damage of the school's physical infrastructure, the death of both teaching and non-teaching personnel, pupils, and other people working at the school.

"The security challenges in Nigeria are myriads in nature and range from simple civil disturbance or communal clashes between neighbouring communities to very large scale disturbance that may threaten the cooperative existence of the country or directed towards the citizenry or organs of government or institutions set up for the well-being of the state or nation" (Kpee & Osiobe, 2014, p. 3).

The focus of this article is to develop a balanced approach to both safety and security problems affecting a hitch free teaching and learning atmosphere in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing number of attacks on school facilities and its inhabitants is really disturbing in Nigeria. Apart from terror attacks, there are also cases of parents and students hiring thugs to beat teachers and even school security personnel. This has been having negative effects on the emotional stability of both the teachers, learners, and non-teaching personnel.

Previous studies have investigated some of the causes of these challenges and how it has aimlessly wasted lives of innocent citizens and non-citizens (Alimba, 2018; Kpee & Osiobe, 2014). Therefore, this study intends to provide 21st century's ways of managing safety and security of schools in Nigeria especially.

Theoretical Framework

The Maslow Hierarchy of Needs theory was used to operationalize this study. The Hierarchy of Needs Model was created by Abraham Maslow in the United States between 1940 and 1950, and it is still useful today for understanding motivation in people, organizational

development, and personal growth. Maslow's theories about the Hierarchy of Needs and the obligation of employers to provide an atmosphere at work that supports and encourages individuals to realize their full potential (self-actualization) are more important than ever (Mubita, 2018).

Basic needs are at the bottom of the hierarchy, and more advanced requirements are at the top. These include physiological needs and safety needs, which are typically categorized as basic wants, as opposed to the secondary or higher needs of love, esteem, and self-actualization (Okumbe, 2007). According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, when a lower need is met, the next highest need takes precedence and the person's attention shifts to meeting this need. As people go up the hierarchy of demands, psychological development occurs, however this is not always a linear progression. Even momentarily, the lesser needs remain motivators, and people frequently return to previously satisfied demands (Armstrong, 2006).

This theory served as a crucial foundation for this study because it recognized the significance of safety and security requirements for the smooth operation of academic activities. The stakeholders in the school needed assurance that their safety and health needs would be met after the physiological demands had been met. Therefore, it was essential that school administration promoted safe and healthy conditions to encourage improved student enrollment, retention, and completion and, as a result, the achievement of quality education. Maslow defines safety as the need for structure and order as well as the pursuit of security, stability, reliance, and protection as well as the liberation from fear, anxiety, and disorder. This suggests that a person yearns for safety, making it a crucial survival need and a crucial desire of people in the Nigerian educational system.

Defining School Safety and School Security

Safety and security are nebulous concepts that are usually difficult to define. Security as a concept is usually conceived as the preservation of values and protection of the life and properties. Security is defined by Mubita (2021) to mean the feeling of being safe from harm, fear, anxiety, oppression, danger, poverty, defense, protection and preservation of core values and threat to those values. According to Buzan, "Security could be defined as the pursuit of freedom from threat and the ability of states and societies to maintain their independent identity and their functional integrity against forces of change, which they see as hostile (Uzuegbu-Wilson, 2019).

Security refers to the protection of individuals, organizations, and properties against external threats that are likely to cause harm. Morgan as cited in Mubita (2021) opined that it is clear that security is generally focused on ensuring that external factors do not cause trouble or unwelcome situation to the organization, individuals, and the properties within the premises" (Mubita, 2021, p.78).

Causes of Insecurity in Schools in Nigeria

The primary cause of extension of insecurity to schools is that the perpetrators of school

attacks perceived it to be a liberating institution from the shackles of ignorance, dogmatism and blind followership. People are transformed by education to the point where they are freed from ignorance and acquire the critical thinking skills necessary to evaluate and confirm ideas before accepting them. Alimba (2018) observed that armed groups target schools because they have the power to liberate people via education.

Secondly, the strong belief by the attackers that Schools are State properties is another key cause of insecurity in Schools in Nigeria. No doubt that all over the world, schools are government investment that helps in the eradication of lawlessness. The UNESCO has ones advised governments to dedicate at least 26 percent of their budget for education. these and other institutions are touched to take a revenge on the government for what they see as laxity. Armed non-state groups frequently attack schools, educators, and students because they regard them as representations of the state. In fact, Alimba (2018) opined they may be the only buildings and government workers in the region in rural locations, fulfilling a variety of functions.

Stakeholders' negligence another factor for insecurity. Research was done on "Managing School Safety in Thailand: Assessing the Implications and Potential of a Lean Thinking Framework" by Srichai et al. (2013). Seven managerial obstacles to effective safety in Thai schools were identified by this research. These include the following: time, money, leadership, culture, dedication, communication, and stakeholder awareness. Some of these seven obstacles to effective safety in Thai schools may apply to the management of schools in Nigeria too in terms of managing safety and health.

Poor funding of the schools is another factor that aids insecurity in the school settings. The study conducted by Nnorom (2020) on security management practices in the 21st century for improved university administration found that there is a direct correlation between the University's deteriorating infrastructure and insufficient security measures and the government's poor funding of the institution. As a result of inadequate finance, employee salaries/allowances are frequently not paid or are paid slowly, which creates a dangerously conducive environment for insecurity in the university. The schools needed adequate money to manage security effectively. She requires money in order to buy, set up, maintain, and take care of other security-related issues as well as superior security equipment.

A Balanced Measures to Managing Safety and Security in School Nigeria

A calm, hostile-free setting is necessary for both teaching and learning in order to protect all people, properties, and materials, security advocates the implementation of both preventative and curative measures.

General Overhaul of Security Operations: Security experts with knowledge of all facets of security management and operational administration are in great demand due to the 21st century's dynamic security issues (Nnorom, 2020). The school management should constitute a security committee that will include representatives of all education stakeholders (parents, teachers, host community leaders, students, security agencies,

education planners and managers and non-government organizations) to review and overhaul security operations.

Human Reformation: there is no doubt that insecurity never come into being without the knowledge of human beings. This means that the attitude/ behavior of is the primary determinant of safe and secured environment. More importantly school curriculums are usually designed to take care of the three domains of learning of taxonomy (the cognitive, the affective and the psychomotor domain). schools therefore need to also take seriously, the affective domain which is meant to reshape the attitudinal disposition of individuals and make all to be morally upright.

Security and Safety Culture: there is a vital need for all the citizens to develop and maintain safety and security culture. Some of the accidents witnessed in schools today are self-induced. Therefore, the affective domain of learning must be revitalized for the benefit of all. The national orientation agency should see it as a point of duty to advocate for safety culture and periodically enlightening citizens on the ideals of good safety culture.

Training and Orientation: School administrators have the responsibility to organize security training sessions internally for the staff and the students. This will equip them with relevant information on how to identify security threats and know what to do to save lives and properties.

Full Implementation of The Policy Guidelines on School Safety and Security: One of the major problems in Nigeria is poor or no implementation of all policy guidelines. The supposed taskforce officers who are government representatives to ensure full compliance are also usually found in the act of compromising standard when offered bribe by the offenders. It is important to ensure thorough application of all policy directives pertaining to the security and safety of staff and students. This effort according to Uzuegbu-Wilson (2019) must include regular risk assessment audits, standby emergency preparedness plans, emergency response teams and command systems, and regular drills to ensure an effective and efficient operational system

Compulsory Provision and Use of Identity Card: All schools should be mandated to take it as point of responsibility to provide identity cards to every member of the school. Also, when there is a visitor, such a person should also be given an identity card indicating he or she is a guest. When there is crime in the school, this will make it easier to recognize and apprehend crime dealers there.

The Use of Security Gadgets: Use of a fence, locks and keys, safes and strong rooms, burglar-proof construction, electrical equipment (such as a CCTV system, metal detectors, x-ray machines, card reader systems, and alarm), and communication systems are some of

the physical security measures that can be implemented (radio, telephone, intercom systems).

Provision of Central and Up-to-date Database: One of the important measures that can be used to eradicate security threat and guarantee a hitch free academic atmosphere in schools in Nigeria is the setting-up of a central database system for schools and other institutions or government and o-government agencies. Recently, the ministry of communication and digital economy ably led by Professor Isa Pantami gave an order for the compulsory registration of National Identification Number (NIN). The minister went further to all institutions including banks, telecommunication companies among others to ensure the link of the NIN to individual account and bar those who fail to provide it from enjoying their services. This gesture must be extended to all schools in Nigeria, both the private schools and the public schools, without fear or favour.

The Role of School Administrators in Ensuring School Safety and Security

School Administrators are the chief security officers of their schools. The first responsibility of the school administrators to guarantee safety of lives and properties is to bring on board all the school stakeholders (government, security personnel, the host community, non-government organizations, the alumni association, the religious bodies, parents, and student to find a lasting solution to unwarranted threats to a hitch free teaching and learning activities. In order to avoid the potential of targeted attacks on schools, school administrators must work closely with key stakeholders. They must also proactively implement intervention strategies to overcome learning impediments (Uzuegbu-Wilson, 2019).

Conclusion

A comprehensive and balanced Security must never be compromised because it is a key requirement for achieving institutional goals. Ignoring the requirement for security management in schools will severely hamper the emotional and physical of the students, the teachers, on-teaching staff and the institution's productive operations. Security management involves ongoing work in all locations and at all times, and it will never be considered perfect. There is a potential that the University will experience unforeseen circumstances that pose a threat to security. Therefore, it is crucial that school administrators continue to create and make use of more appropriate and adequate security management techniques to ensure that hazards are drastically reduced around schools. However, a security strategy that strikes a balance between cooperation among effective university stakeholders and the institution's role as a breeding ground for good citizens.

Suggestions for the School Administrators

1. Planning and administration for school safety and security should heavily engage internal stakeholders.

2. Governments should provide more fund to acquire relevant security gadgets
3. School administrators should adopt a hybrid security strategy where both traditional and modern-day digital security measures are combined
4. Reorientation and creation of safety and security awareness among all school stakeholders.

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