NIGERIA'S CONTEMPORARY SECURITY CHALLENGES: ITS IMPACTS ON EDUCATION AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

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Abstract

In Nigeria, the absence of permanent peace, security and stability have remained a major cause of concern to academicians and policy makers within and outside the country. To this extent, this paper explores some Nigeria's contemporary security challenges and its impacts on education. It reaffirms that Nigeria, today, faces a number of considerable peace and security challenges which are caused by corruption and poverty, ethno-religious conflicts, militants, kidnapping, terrorism, poor governance, and forced displacement. It further explores the impacts of these security challenges and instability on education in Nigeria in connection with the closure of schools and disruption of educational activities, a decline in enrollment and poor quality of education among others. Afterwards, it unravels possible solutions to Nigeria's contemporary security challenges, including employing a number of ICT tools to combat insecurity including mobile phones, CCTV, and biometric data mining, to combat the insurgency and other criminal acts. The paper recommends that non-government and international organisations can support Nigerian government to curb violent conflicts, and terrorist attacks on educational institutions and facilities.

Key Words: Nigeria, Security, Challenges, Education and Solutions

Introduction

Education is designed purposely to assist individuals to develop their skills and abilities so as to fulfill their potentials (Joshua, et al., 2016). It is a process by which individuals are assisted formally through proper direction and guidance to develop their capacities for their own benefit and that of the society (Okeke, 2003). This lends credence to the proposition that "the goal of education is to emancipate, learn practical skills, and to accelerate political, cultural, social and economic development" (Fombele, 2013:174). In

this wise, Ene (2008:196) has argued that its major "goal is to help the learner develop his natural abilities by creating the necessary environment that will facilitate, challenge and involve him socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally in the art of learning and doing". To this extent, the behaviour of a person can be changed in the right direction through it. In other words, with sound education people will start to understand and appreciate one another better and try to restore the dignity of man.

Security is when learners are free from any form of terror attack which is detrimental to their academic pursuits (Hiliya and Umar, 2021). In contrast, insecurity refers to uncertainty or anxiety about oneself; lack of confidence; the state of being vulnerable; open to danger or threat and lack of protection. In turn with this argument, Ubong (2016) opined that it is a feeling of self doubt or vulnerability and susceptibility to injury or harm. Achumba, et al. (2013), defined insecurity from two perspectives. Firstly, as the state of being open to danger, where, danger is the condition of being susceptible to harm. Secondly, as the state of being exposed to risk or anxiety; and, where, anxiety is an unpleasant emotion that is experienced in anticipation of misfortune. Within this context, insecurity refers to threats, dangers and deprivation meted against innocent people.

Without doubt, Nigeria society is getting more and more insecure, more people are getting into various violent crimes and they are getting more sophisticated especially with the advancement of digital technologies. Since independence, terrorist activities have surfaced, including the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Ododua People Congress (OPC), Movement for Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Maitatsine group amongst others (Bakari, 2022). Nigeria's security challenges further include kidnapping for ransom, pipeline vandalisation, Boko Harem, ritual killings, armed robbery and ethno-religious clashes (Bidemi et al., 2018). In point of fact, these security challenges have been causing instability in schools, affecting learners' abilities to study effectively. A reminder for such reading, in a way, resides in the continuation:

> The high level of insecurity in Nigeria has become a social problem …
> that cannot be over-emphasized because of its far-reaching implications
> and direct consequences on education, ... Most worrisome is the emerging
> new forms of insecurity challenges in contemporary Nigeria which have
> taking a disturbing dimension to the extent that it has almost crippled the
> various sectors, especially the education sector in Nigeria…recently, the
> country witnessed a total breakdown of law and order due to what the
> Nigeria youths described as "End SARS Protest, a movement that they
> considered to be an end to police brutality … (Solomon and Solomon,
> 2021, 581).

As a corollary to the aforementioned, one is led to believe that the Nigeria educational system is deep into crises on multiple fronts. Along this line, Albert (2004) affirmed that contemporary security challenges includes; communal violence, political assassination, electoral youth militancy in the Niger Delta, oil theft, bunkering, state corruption and poverty have all been identified as some of the challenges threatening security in Nigeria. This tendency further espoused the idea that insecurity has become perennial and an agonising challenge in Nigeria (Iyoha et al., 2010). In all likelihood, under the present situation of security challenges in Nigeria, effective teaching and learning might not be achievable or realisable. In this regards, this paper explores some Nigeria's contemporary

security challenges and its impacts on Nigeria's education system; and afterwards, proffers some solutions.

Nigeria's Contemporary Security Challenges

Nigeria has in recent times experienced an exceptional level of insecurity. Almost all the regions (if not all) are faced with insecurity (Oghuvbu & Chidozie, 2018). It is currently besieged by a myriad of security challenges even though it has always been seen as the giant of Africa (Yusufu, 2022). The issue of insecurity in contemporary Nigeria has become a threat to both internal and international peace and security with ever-growing violence and attacks on security forces, civilians, churches, media houses as well international bodies such as the United Nations (Oluwasanmi, et. al, 2022). In this wise, Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, is grappling with critical security challenges that pose significant threats to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Some of these security challenges threatening Nigeria include terrorism, banditry, ethno-religious crisis, kidnapping, militants, and forced displacement among others issues which shall be the focus of this section.

Undoubtedly, terrorism has become a significant threat to Nigeria's sovereignty as illustrated in the chart below based on the number of terrorist attacks in Nigeria between 2018 and 2022. It is considered to be violent reactions against an established social order. Terrorist attacks aim to create fear among the population and it is often driven by political, religious and ideological objectives. In other words, it is aimed often at disturbing individuals' perception of normalcy, induce terror, and force victims to reconsider the validity of their prior convictions and beliefs. The impact of terrorism in the country has been very severe, leading to human casualties, economic damage, and erosion of civil liberties and human rights. In the North, the internal security of the country has been significantly undercut by the violent activities of Boko Haram sect. Unlike the militants in the Niger Delta that are driven by purely economic goals, Boko Haram is driven by proclivity in religious conviction, political aspirations and social practice. Specifically, its ultimate goal is to make Nigeria an Islamic State as set out in the Holy Koran (Walker, 2012).
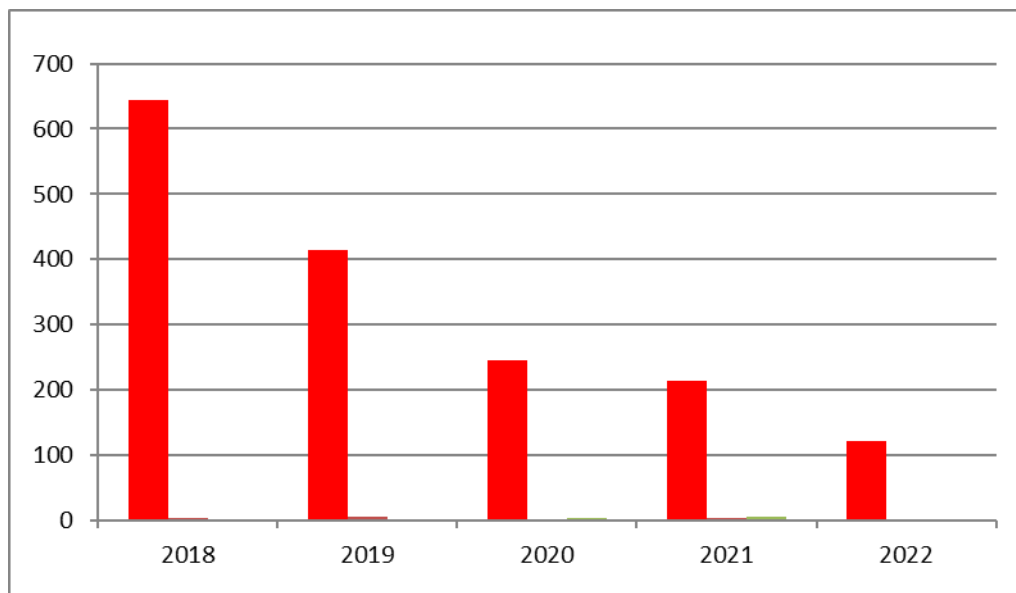

Figure 1: Terrorist attacks in Nigeria between 2018 and 2022

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Source: Ameh (2023)

Another form of contemporary security challenge facing Nigeria which has become unbearable in the last decade is armed banditry. It refers to organised criminal activities involving violence and coercion, such as robbery, kidnapping, and extortion (Richardson, 2019). It also involves the use of force, or threat to intimidate a person with the intent to rape, rob and kill. It manifests in four major dimensions, namely kidnapping, armed robbery, village raids and cattle rustling. Of these four dimensions, kidnapping and mass abduction of people, especially defenseless and innocent school pupils for ransom is gradually taking the lead. The implications of terrorism and banditry have been deeply felt across the country bringing about bombings, kidnappings, armed robbery, disruption of economic development and other violent acts. Overall, both terrorism and banditry are complex and multifaceted phenomenon that requires nuanced and multidisciplinary approaches to effectively prevent and respond to while safeguarding human rights and democratic values (Ameh, 2023).

Furthermore, Nigeria today has become increasingly ungovernable due to ethnic and religious cleavages (Lenshie, 2020). This form of conflict arises from distrust among the various ethnic groups and the major religion in the country. It has been identified as a major cause of insecurity in Nigeria. With over four hundred (400) ethnic groups, belonging to several religious sects, Nigeria since independence has remained a multi-ethnic nation state, which has been struggling and trying to cope with the problem of ethnicity on the one hand, and the problem of ethno-religious conflicts on the other (Bakari, 2023). In Nigeria, some people are so attached to their religion to the extent that they are ready to die for it, ignorantly. Over the years, ethnicity and religious intolerance have led to nonstop recurrence of ethno-religious conflicts. A glimpse of some of these ethno-religious crises include; the Maitatsine sectarian crisis in 1981, the Kaduna and Bulunkutu (Maiduguri) in 1982, the Ilorin Muslim-Christian riot in March 1986, Zaria and Funtua religious riots of March 1987. But the most worrisome account so far is the recent large scale of unimaginable bomb attacks by the Boko Haram movement which is escalating every day (Aleyomi, 2012).

The menace of terrorism and insurgency as well as armed or ethno-religious conflicts has turned out to be the prominent causes of conflict-induced internal displacement in Nigeria. According to Alobo and Obaji (2016) it is a situation in which individuals and groups are compelled or obliged to leave and remain away from their homes, but remain within the borders of their own countries. The latter element differentiates them from refugees, who are also compulsorily evacuated but across internationally recognized state borders. Since the beginning of 2014, the increase of violence caused by Boko Haram insurgency has triggered a massive wave of internal displacement in the north eastern part of Nigeria (Adebayo, 2014; Afolabi, 2015; Akume & Godswill, 2016; Imasuen, 2015). The country is also prone to community clashes which have generated and continued to cause forced displacement all across most parts of the northern region in the country (Alimba, 2014; Tayo, 2017). The frequent occurrences of conflicts and crises in Northern Nigeria call for pro active measures by the security sector and the government in the country.

Some scholars have also contended with the proposition that corruption and poverty are the major challenges confronting peace and security in Nigeria. The poverty in Nigeria is not as a result of war, natural disasters and lack of resources. Nigeria's poverty is as a result of social exclusion which consequently puts majority of the masses at the bottom of

the pyramid, while a few individuals who occupy the zenith created a comfort zone for themselves to the discomfort of the masses. This has degenerated into crises and almost leading to the collapse of the state. This tendency further espouses the idea that poverty (produced by corruption) is the mother of insecurity (Salaudeen, 2021).

All in all, in the Nigerian context, it seems security has been elusive for some time due to some of the indicators of insecurity elucidated above, which include; terrorist attacks, kidnapping, ethno-religious conflict, armed banditry, and violence. Still, it has taken different dimensions in the various regions across the country. While the militants and the local oil firms engage in combat in the Niger Delta, the militant Islamist groups, known as the Boko Harem insurgents have been linked to violence in Northern Nigeria. In other regions such as in the South-East and the South-West, kidnapping, ritual killing and trading of human organs for ritual money, and armed robbery have mostly been posing the greatest challenges to security. In all these, what is quite obvious is that insecurity is a threat to education and national development.

Contemporary Security Challenges and Its Impacts on Education in Nigeria

Education is an important aspect of human society that has link with all sectors and facets of life. Many developed societies rode on it to achieve prosperity, stability and sustainability (Gulesh, et al., 2022). Security on the other hand, guarantees peaceful atmosphere for the conduct of all human activities, including impartation of knowledge which is the primary purpose of education. To be sure, Nigeria has been experiencing a bridge in security with direct bearings on its education system. Children are the most affected, forced to drop out of school. This further happens against the backdrop of school closure, bombing of schools, assassinator of schoolteachers, attack and abduction of students, low school enrollment, poor academic performance and widespread illiteracy in addition to the need to promote and develop the education sector.

To start with, insecurity, especially as it pertains to terrorism, brings about disruption of educational activities which means it often leads to the closure of schools, making it difficult for students to access education. It equally affects general school attendance, and enrolment as parents pull their children out of school while in some extreme cases, schools are shut down completely (Amech, 2015). This again is as a result of the persistent attack on educational institutions by the Boko Haram sect which most times is a premeditated attempt to disrupt learning (Nzewi, 2015). This is further evident in wanton destruction and burning of facilities in Adamawa State University and the Federal Polytechnic Mubi, among others (Ogege, 2011). Along this line, Nte et.al. (2023:46) argues:

Nigeria is confronted with the significant challenge of having the most perilous and insecure educational institutions globally, which consequently, contributes to the substandard academic performance of its students and the inadequate development of its educational system. The persistent issue observed in higher educational institutions in Jos, Nigeria, serves as a distinct indication that educational establishments in the country are not secure. This implies that primary schools, high schools, and universities in Nigeria are also vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

Also, Nigeria's security challenges affect the quality of education in the country. This is because teachers and students are often displaced by violent conflict and terrorist attack, leading to a shortage of qualified teachers and a lack of resources for learning. In

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addition, the trauma and stress caused by these challenges have been negatively affecting the cognitive development of students, thereby, causing poor academic performance. In line with this argument, Ogunode et al. (2021) revealed that insecurity in Nigeria is contributing to poor quality education because, school scheme of work and syllables are not covered especially in schools that are shut down. The inability of these schools to cover their scheme of work and syllables is reducing the quality of education.

In addition, parents are discouraged from sending their children to school due to the nation's security challenges. Attacks on educational institutions and their facilities are deterring parents and students from attending classes, particularly in the northeastern region of the country. In this sense, many parents have decided to keep their children at home instead of been killed and kidnapped at schools where safety is not guaranteed. Thus, in the face of security threats in Nigeria, parents consider pulling their children out of schools. In this regard, Oluyomi and Grace (2016) have argued that students might miss school for days as a result of security challenges. The girl-child, as well, is also negatively affected. She is kept at home for a long time or given out for early marriage.

In summary, the noble goals of education can never be achieved in an unsafe or in a violent environment. In other words, teaching and learning can only be achieved in a safe, secure, conducive and serene environment. Whenever there is a feeling of insecurity for any reason, within or outside the school environment, both the teachers and the students become vulnerable and this will automatically hinder students' academic performance.

Possible Solutions to Nigeria's Contemporary Security Challenges

Security issues are very important for the development of any nation. This is so because sustainable development is a function of an enabling environment. In Nigeria, the need for heightened security measures is particularly crucial due to the presence of various security threats such as terrorism, militancy, insurgency, armed conflicts and organised crime. These challenges not only pose a threat to the stability and development of the country but also hinder foreign investments and economic growth. In view of this, the government must take some important and crucial steps to curtail insecurity and terrorism in order for development to thrive. These steps include:

Nigeria should employ a number of ICT tools to combat insecurity including mobile phones, CCTV and biometric data mining, to combat the insurgency. For example, CCTV can be used to monitor movement and visuals in relation to what is happening in some specific locations. The government or the agencies involved in the proper enhancement of security can use all these applications to have additional and verifiable information, especially with the use of the CCTV, where there is a lot of surveillance coverage to what are the activities that are being monitored (Nte et al. 2023). This has become necessary due the nature of security in the 21st century which according to Aduloju (2013) has gone beyond shooting and bombing, it is now more of arrest and gathering of intelligent reports. Aduloju further started that developed nations do not wait for criminals to perpetuate crimes before they act. They have adopted the strategy of First Strike Capability to deter criminals. This is made possible through the application of modern technologies.

To curtail instability, insecurity and terrorism in Nigeria, there is need to strengthen the judicial system by ensuring that justice is dispensed no matter who is involved. Also, the judiciary in ensuring the security of the nation should promptly intervene in matters of

conflict which poses imminent threat to the survival of the nation. The judiciary should be responsive at all times to bail out the nation from serious crisis that could divide the nation into various factions and hostilities that are capable of leading the nation into another civil war (Akanle and Akanle, 2022).

Nigerian police and other security agencies must be well-equipped and trained and re-trained to tackle present day security challenges. Qualified and bright individuals should be encouraged with good incentives to enlist into the security agencies. The police must not be a dumping ground for dullards. The police should be reformed effectively. Their forensic laboratory must be well-equipped funded and staffed with qualified personnel. Nigerians must be continually sensitised to be security conscious. Security is a collective responsibility. So, government must not push its citizens so hard that they resort to criminality, violence and terrorism, so that there will be improvement in the socio-economic and political system of Nigeria.

Finally, there should be collaboration among security agencies like the State Security Service, the Police, the Armed Forces, the Civil Defence as well as the involvement of more groups beyond uniformed forces while government should train special anti-terrorist squad which could be created out of the Army, Air force, Navy and Police to complement the efforts of the National Intelligence Agency and State Security Service (SSS) in fighting terrorism. In addition, Nigeria's security agencies and national intelligent agencies need ideological overhauling in the intelligence and technical expertise. This according to Akalue (2022) will lead to a thorough review of the recruitment processes, and the overall welfare of security agencies which will also feature proper language formation since the country is a multicultural State.

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Conclusion

This research has focused on Nigeria's contemporary security challenges. In the course of unraveling some of these security challenges with various forms of violence, including terrorist attacks, ethno-religious conflicts, banditry and violent extremism, the paper focused on its impacts on education and possible solutions. To this extent, the paper affirmed that insecurity has significant impacts on education in Nigeria. Some of the impacts of security challenges are felt in the closure of schools, leading to disruption of academic activities for students. It has affected the quality of education since scheme of works and syllables are not always covered when schools are shut down. It was revealed that security challenges are some of the factors responsible for the rapid decline in enrollment of students, especially in northern Nigeria. In addition, to curb insecurity the Nigeria police should be effectively reformed and well-equipped to fight contemporary security challenges. The country should also employ a number of ICT tools to combat insecurity including mobile phones, CCTV and biometric data mining to combat security challenges.

Recommendations

Sequel to the revelations and implications of the discourse, the following recommendations become imperative:

1. Government should declare education in emergency in places affected by insecurity. This is because education in emergency is a critical intervention that provides education opportunities to children affected by conflict and violent extremism; and

2. Non-government organisation or donor agencies and international organization can support effort to curb violent conflicts, and terrorist attacks on educational institutions and facilities. They can also provide fund and learning materials to students and schools and technical support to the Nigerian government in curbing attacks on schools and in helping those affected.

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