Enhancing Security in Nigerian Public Primary Schools

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Abstract
This paper is titled enhancing security in Nigerian Primary Schools. The security issue in Nigeria is an area of concerns, many schools were forced to closed and some turned to camps for refugees However, this paper examined the concept of primary education, concept of security, components of school security such as violence, natural hazards, everyday hazards, conflicts, and safety of school facilities. Factors affecting Security in public primary school were also identified such as: inadequate funding, poor community engagement, geographical location, poverty and unemployment, inadequate monitoring and supervision of primary school activities. Similarly, physical safety measures, adequate funding of primary school to fight insecurity, community involvement in managing insecurity in primary schools, favorable environment for school and inadequate monitoring and supervision of primary school activities were identified as ways of enhancing security in primary school. The paper recommended that stakeholders' efforts in financial supports to primary schools should be improved.to address the security challenges by increasing government allocation, grants and donations through public and private partnership.

KEYWORDS: Public Primary Schools, Insecurity, Primary Education, Security

Introduction

      Primary school is an environment where teaching and learning takes place, it is like any other organization where safety and security is required for smooth operation. Primary school is a formal organization where teachers, pupils, time, and other resources are effectively managed in order to achieve the desired goal. Primary school is an educational institution that provides foundational education to children, typically between the ages of 6 and 11. Primary school is an institution that prepares children for secondary education. Primary education is the foundation upon which all other level of education relies on. Once it fails, the whole system will fail vice-versa. (Gumbi & Ahmed 2017). Primary education in Nigeria is for all, and no child should be deprived from getting it. A child is expected to start at six, and complete the cycle at eleven. Therefore, it is a six-year programme. At this level, pupils are expected to be trained

educationally, socially, morally and logically. The primary school curriculum is very reach and flexible that trains pupils to differentiate between good and bad, right and wrong.

The aim of primary education is to provide children of school going-age with basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. This can only be possible when the school is safe from any form of insecurity. However, ensuring security in primary school is very important for the peaceful and harmonious coexistence of quality primary education in Nigeria. In line with this, Achumba, Ighomereho, and Akpor-Robaro (2015) viewed security as the existence of conditions within which people in the society can go about their normal daily activities without any treat to their lives and properties. Therefore, school security is crucial for achieving primary education objectives.

For over a decade, Nigeria has witnessed the deliberate targeting of education, such as killings, abductions, and maiming of learners, teachers, non-teaching staff and destruction of educational facilities. Not less than 611 teachers have been killed, 19,000 teachers displaced, 910 schools damaged or destroyed, and more than 1,500 schools forced to close. An estimated 900,000 children have lost access to learning, while 75 percent of children in IDP camps do not attend school. At the start of the school year in September 2021, at least one million children did not resume because families and communities were afraid of sending their children back to school due to the insecurity. This disruption to learning contributes to the high number of out-of-school children (OOSC) and increases the risk of children never stepping into a classroom again (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2021)

Concept of Primary Education

Primary education is the first stage of formal education where children are enrolled to learn formal education for six years. It has been defined in different ways by different scholars according to their perception. Moreover, FRN, (2013) revealed that Primary education is education given to children aged 6-11. Therefore, primary education is an education a child receives between six to eleven years. It prepares pupils for secondary education. At this level, pupils are expected to pass through six different levels.

Concept of Security

One of the overwhelming socio-political challenges facing present-day Nigeria is insecurity, which has manifested itself in alarming dimensions. Like many other nations of the world, irrespective of their level of development, Nigeria faces a plethora of security challenges. The concept of security is not new; it can be said to be central even in primitive societies, as shown in the survival of the fittest. Arguably, security can be regarded as the most basic need of human beings and societies. (Akinwumi & Itobore, 2019). Therefore, the term security literally refers to "a state of being free from danger or threat" (Oxford Dictionary in Meerts, 2019). This is all-encompassing definition, though the word security means different thing to different people depending on the conception.

Therefore, Security is an element of peaceful and pleasant coexistence which is a basis of quality primary education in every society. In line with this, Francis (2006) viewed security as the condition or feeling of safety from harm or danger, the defense, protection and absence of traits to acquire valuable; security is not only the absence or availability of ammunition for destruction. According to Alimba (2018), security is an all-encompassing condition in which people and communities live in freedom, peace, and safety; participate fully in the governance of their countries; enjoy the protection of fundamental rights; have access to resources and basic necessities of life; and inhabit an environment that is not detrimental to their health and well-being. Security is protection against all forms of harm, whether physical, economic, or psychological (Achumba et al. 2015). However, it is argued that security may not be the absence of threats or security issues, but the ability to rise to the challenges posed by threats with expediency and expertise. This reconceptualization underscores the need to develop security awareness through teaching and learning values and building positive attitudes about security among students. through curricula and other school activities. In relation to this, Security in school connotes the provision of peaceful and favorable environment where both curricula and extra-curricular activities will take place without harm and distraction. Teaching is the most peaceful profession in the world and it require all efforts to enhance security in primary school setting for effective teaching and learning.

Concept of School Security

School security can be defined as measures taken for the protection of the pupils, staff, property and other school valuable assets from attacks or dangers. Kurtus (2012) argues that security is a plan by administrators or principals to protect students and staff in the event of danger. It is a plan against the criminal and anti-social behavior which can cause disruption to the work of the school, physical and mental damage to the people and damage to the school building (Brien et al. 2009). It also includes developmental strategies put forward to actualize effective and conducive school environment that will bring about improvement in the quality of the people. School security in a narrow sense implies the absence of threat to life and property of the people in primary school. Campbell (2007) avers that school security are the strategies and procedures required to coordinate the diverse activities of the school, protect and manage school violence, reduce security risks and ensure that the school environment is safe for teaching and learning. Funding for school safety and security improvements could come through the local community (mill levies, bond issues, and capital campaigns), grants (federal and state agencies), or private foundations. One thing all funding sources have in common is that they are opportunity and topic driven; that is to say both the timing and the message about The need must fit the opportunity at hand. (Guy 2024).

Security in Primary Schools

Security is the most important thing in primary schools. School cannot operate without peaceful working environment. It is a prerequisite for achieving desirable goal. Therefore, (FRN, 2021) argued that Schools are important to nation building; the school represents a space where learners are comprehensively educated and developed. This development, however, can be guaranteed only if learning takes place in a safe and peaceful environment. Therefore, a holistic school safety and security plan is critical to ensure that all learners, staff members and school property (including buildings and equipment) as well as school communities are protected from human-induced and natural hazards.

School security is important as it relates to pupils and their ability to concentrate and learn. Learning requires a positive atmosphere in which pupils feel not just physically safe, but emotionally safe as well. Creating such environment means ensuring pupils safety throughout the school day and keeping them free from physical, social and emotional bullying. Mbie (2003) states that students cannot learn if they do not feel safe and that a safe school environment is essential for students of all ages. This is corroborated by Kennedy in Gbadeyan et al. (2016), believed that if students and staff do not feel safe, education often takes a back seat. This means that school safety includes ensuring the protection and well-being of teachers and school administration so that they can feel safe and effectively do their job. Teachers who have their safety and security at stake cannot concentrate on teaching; thus, the students lack qualified teachers needed for their successful academic pursuit

Components of School Security

The following are the five components and thematic approach to safety and security in school as enshrined in FRN, (2021).

1. Violence, this factor focuses on all forms of violence in schools, broadly grouped as physical, emotional (psychological), sexual, gender-based and negligence, and bullying. Furthermore, FRN, (2021). viewed violence as threatened or actual use of unlawful force which may be physical, psychological, sexual, or gender-based in nature or negligent treatment intended to cause fear, pain, physical or psychological suffering. School violence can be anything that involves a real or implied threat it can be verbal, sexual, or physical, and perpetrated with or without weapons. If someone is deliberately harming someone or acting in a way that leaves someone feeling threatened, that's school violence, (Gupta, 2015). In most public primary schools today, bullying is common among teacher-pupils and pupil-pupil. This is because of other social vices associated with both of them in school. Some are into the social vices due to ignorance, peer influence and passion.

2. Natural hazards, which focuses on amelioration and prevention of natural hazards like floods and windstorms which is common in some Primary schools located in rural and semi-rural areas (FRN, 2021). Natural hazards refer to any natural disaster that occurs within the school environment that

will lead to growing concern about the school activities. Similarly, Akcay et al. (2023) revealed that natural disasters such as earthquakes, fires, tsunamis, floods, hurricanes, and drought have occurred on a global scale recently. In this context, people should be aware of natural disasters and be prepared to take precautions against them in order to reduce the dangers posed by them. In line with this, natural hazards are mostly common in rural and semi-urban areas where primary schools are located in prone and displaced environment, near bushes, droughts, earthquakes, floods, heat waves, landslide, such as tropical cyclones, volcanic activity, dust storms, firestorms, thunderstorms, air pollution and water pollution. Natural hazard can cause a damage in school properties, destruct school structure and cause teachers, pupils and parents unrest

3. Everyday hazards, which focuses on the reduction of everyday health hazards (epidemics, pandemics, malaria, malnutrition) power shortages, drowning, playground accidents, dangerous materials and so on (FRN, 2021). These are man-made disasters that can be as results of bad attitudes of people within the community where the school is located. School location requires careful and special attention so that it will be in a safe environment and faraway from noisy places like industries, market places, river side, major roads, oceans, masjid or churches. These are among the causes of calendar disruption and total closure of schools.

4. Conflicts, which focuses on the prevention and reduction of conflict hazards like the use of schools by security forces, armed attacks on schools, civil unrest, unexploded ordnances, abduction/kidnapping and child recruitment; this is common in many primary schools in Northern part of the country. Schools have now been turned to refugees' camps, stash houses, bandits' hide-out, and military camps, main target of bandits, kidnappers and Boko Haram.

5. Safety of school facilities, this focuses on the proper dissemination of safety and security policies to staff, learners and all affiliates of education. When school is taken over by the bandits, kidnappers, Boko haram, or became refugees' camp, military camps and bandits' den, the school facilities will be destroyed. Teachers and pupils will not have access to classes, school environment and other school facilities, the school activities will be suspended. Most primary schools in rural areas are dilapidated, classes are without roping, the cracking walls that turned to hide-out of reptiles, termites etc.

Factors affecting Security in Public Primary School
1. **Inadequate Funding:** Primary schools in Nigeria lack funding to operate. As a result of this, Primary schools failed to meet its desired goal. Even though it was recommended by UNESCO, and National Policy on Education to allocate 26% while World Bank recommended 20-30% of Nigerian budgetary allocation to education. The allocation is far below expectations. Among the reason for this is the neglect of the system by the concern stakeholders. Funding primary school is a collective responsibility (Gumbi, & Usman 2025). The rising security concerns in Nigerian primary schools as a result of poor funding is worsening and lead to closure of many schools. Despite the huge allocation on insecurity, primary schools have limited infrastructure, insufficient security personnel limited access to emergency resources, inadequate training, making them vulnerable to attacks

2. **Poor Community Engagement:** Primary schools are firmed established to promote social, economic, infrastructural, health, and educational development of the community. Similarly, the progress and development of the community is bestowed on school. School cannot operate without community. Limited involvement of community members in school safety and security measures aggravates security risks. Community members should be vigilant in maintaining the school facilities from damage and destruction. In some communities, school buildings and other facilities are to be protected by the people in the community with the supports of School Based- Management Committee (SBMC), Parent Teachers' Association (PTA) Old Boys Associations or any other association that render community services in the society.

3. **Geographical Location:** As an institution of learning, Primary school should be located in a noise free environment, free from hazard and any security threats. It should be in a conducive

environment, so that pupils will interact, and relate with one another without any fear. Primary schools established in conflict –prone areas like Northwest, Northeast and North central regions in Nigeria are likely to face the threats of insecurity and insurgency. This is in consonance with Adesulu (2019) who reported that about 800 students, including those of higher institutions, have been abducted in coordinated attacks on schools in mostly northern states of the country in the last six months. Punch news editorial (2021) gave the breakdown of abduction of students and pupils to includes 344 school children of Government Science Secondary School, Kankara, and 80 pupils of Islamiyya School, Mahuta, both in Katsina State; 27 boys at GSS College, Kagara, Niger State; 279 school girls of Government Girls Secondary School, Jangebe, Zamfara State; 39 students at the Federal College of Forestry Mechanisation, Kaduna; 23 students at Greenfield University, Kaduna; and three students at the Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Benue State. While some of the students were lucky to be freed, others were brutally murdered. Several others are still in captivity.

4. **Poverty and Unemployment:** Insecurity rises with unemployment and poverty according to Kirby in Stewart, 2021), because unemployment leads to loss of income which affects the people's ability to pay their bills and provide basic necessities for their households and dependent relatives. It is because of the insecurity posed by unemployment that advanced countries make social security payment to the unemployed to keep them off the streets until they get jobs. This has helped to make their nations safer than countries like Nigeria where no form of assistance is given to the unemployed. In relation to this, poverty and unemployment are significant threats to security in Primary schools. Because it lead to increase in vulnerability, limited access to education, reduced community backing and increased in crime. These menaces gave birth to incessant insecurity in schools, disruption of primary school calendar, increased in attacks, kidnappings and violence.

5. **Inadequate Monitoring and Supervision of Primary School Activities:** Monitoring and supervision are beyond curricular activities. Although Anekwe and Abe (2015) revealed that monitoring and supervision improve teachers' commitment as well as students' learning outcomes. However, it requires thorough and full supervision of every aspect of school. A secured and peaceful school environment guaranteed effective teaching and learning environment. However, the rate at which the rural primary schools are supervised is a clear indication that the monitoring and supervision is faulty, as a results of these, lack of CCTV cameras, insufficient security personnel, poor access control and in adequate emergency response plans lead to vulnerabilities and security breaches, theft, vandalisation of school properties, violence and unauthorised access to school premises and risk to students, teachers, and staff.

Ways of Enhancing Security in Primary School

In order to enhance security in Nigerian primary schools, the following ways need to be followed:

1. **Physical Safety Measures:** Security in Primary school is very important. Since Nigerian public primary school cannot be provided with the modern security devices like CCTV Cameras, Alarm System and other security detective related devices, Perimeter fencing and secure classrooms should be provided, safety zones should be created for pupils and teachers during emergencies as well as constant surveillance with adequate and constant lightening as well as constant PTA meetings within the primary schools.

2. **Adequate funding of Primary school to fight insecurity:** Primary schools in Nigeria require adequate funding. The most annoying thing is that a significant number of people blame government for neglecting the sector, whereas it is a collective responsibility. However, government should be at the fore-front while other stakeholders support by donation so that the menace will be curbed. The budget allocation meant to fight insecurity should not be limited to Defense Ministry it should permeates to concern school since the mission is aimed to fight insecurity in the country.

3. **Community Involvement in managing insecurity in primary schools:** Community refers to people living in the society, they are part and parcel of school targets. The school is established for the community. Therefore, the school should be protected by the community. This can only be guaranteed

when the school involves the community in its day-to-day activities. So, the head teacher is expected to take the school to the community and bring the community to school so that they will feel their relevance to school affairs. The school will not be safe without the support of the community, people in the community watch, and reports any incident they witness during and after the school hours.

4. **Favourable Primary School Environment for School:** Primary school should be sited in a conducive environment and away from hazards, and pollutions. However, some schools are located in outskirts; therefore, the schools are exposed to security threats. Favorable primary school environment should be created so that conditions and atmosphere that promote safety, protection, and support for pupils, teachers, and non-teaching staff will be ensured. Safe buildings, security measures, a positive school culture, supportive parents and community, and emergency plans should be provided in primary schools.

5. **Adequate Monitoring and Supervision of Primary School Activities:** Constant monitoring and supervision of primary schools should be adhered to. Ensuring security in public primary school requires collective effort. It should not be left to a single individual. Both government, teachers, supporting staff, pupils, community members like parents, youths, vigilante groups, security personnel should come together to ensure the school facilities are not destroyed, school structure functions effectively, classes are not use as stash houses or hideouts for criminals.

Conclusion

This article highlighted the need, importance and how to improved security in Nigerian public primary schools. In order to have a peaceful and safe environment for teaching and learning, challenges facing school security must be identified and measures should be applied in order to ensure conducive learning environment.

Recommendations

1. Stakeholders' efforts in financial supports to primary schools should be improved.to address security challenges by increasing government allocation, grants and donations through public and private partnership.
2. Community members such as parents, local leaders and community-based organizations should form some security committees, events and activities to build trust, collaborations and eye support for primary schools.
3. Primary schools should be located in the area that allows for easy monitoring, free from hazards, pollution and proximity to emergency services such as hospitals police station or Army barracks.
4. Government and other stakeholders should improve in the provision of poverty reduction programmes and employment for the citizens.
5. Adequate monitoring and supervision should be improved through increase in staff presence, installing CCTV Cameras and other security associated devices and maintain regular patrols in primary schools.

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