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# **Insecurity and Education in Nigeria: A Critical Analysis**

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## **Abstract**

This paper examined the state of security in Nigeria and its implications for education and by extension sustainable national development. Insecurity in Nigeria has reached alarming proportions as it is gradually becoming synonymous with the country. There are militant and secessionist groups in the south, and terrorists and armed bandits in the north. This situation has been fuelled by the increasing rate of unemployment and poverty, porous and unsecured borders, corruption and bad governance, lopsided distribution of wealth and development, as well as weak judicial system, among others. These have profound effects on the literacy rate, reduction of female enrolment and destruction of educational facilities or their conversion to centres for internally displaced persons. The implications of insecurity for the socio-economic development of Nigeria include loss of investment opportunities, political instability, brain-drain, production of uneducated and half-baked graduates to man the various sectors of the nation's economy, etc. As part of measures to mitigate the ugly trend, some recommendations among others were made, such as formulation of policies to enhance the security architecture and promote job creation, strengthening of the judicial system to make it more effective, and improving on the standard of governance by entrenching the culture of probity and accountability.

## **Introduction**

Since the return to civil rule in 1999, Nigeria has seen an unprecedented increase in insecurity. Many had expected that with the military back to the barracks, security would be guaranteed and development fast tracked. But no sooner had civilians taken over the reins of power than insecurity raised its ugly head in different forms. From the oil rich South came the militancy after the Kaiama declaration of 1998 that articulated the grievances of the region and the strategies for achieving restitution.<sup>1</sup> It gave rise to different militant groups who waged war against the state and among themselves, thereby creating tension and insecurity, and infuse fear in the inhabitants of the region. This situation was heightened by the unprecedented proliferation of arms and ammunition – the tools for kidnapping, assassination and violence. One of the reactions of the government of the day was the deployment of troops to Odi in Bayelsa State which resulted in a massacre that has been widely condemned. This resulted in the declaration of war by the various militant groups in the already charged region against the Federal Government.<sup>2</sup>

In the north, Boko Haram under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf began as a non-violent movement, until its leader was extra-judicially murdered in 2009, and his deputy Abubakar Shekau took over its leadership and began a violent campaign against the Federal Government.<sup>3</sup> This has increased insecurity and violence especially in the Northeast where villages have been

sacked and communities destroyed. As if these are not enough, Nigerians now live in perpetual fear because of armed bandits and herdsmen attacks, which are testament to the regrettable state of security pervasive in the country.

In view of the invaluable role education plays in any society that is desirous of meaningful and sustainable national development, this paper seeks to critically examine the implications of security on education in Nigeria, especially considering the spate of kidnaps and attacks on educational institutions in recent times.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

The cardinal concepts that underpin this paper would be contextually clarified for a better comprehension of the topic of this discourse. The concepts are insecurity and education.

### **The Concept of Insecurity**

The term “insecurity” denotes a state of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty; a situation that connotes a deep sense of vulnerability, risk and defencelessness. It also implies the absence of protection, safety and stability. In other words, where these precarious situations abound, there will be loss of confidence, trust and mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence among members of a given society as most people will feel unprotected, and open to unwarranted attack from unsuspected assailants or aggressors, whose objectives are destruction of lives and property.

On the other hand, security according to Okonkwo, Ndubuisi-Okolo and Anagbogu, can be conceptualized in two perspectives.<sup>4</sup> Firstly, it is the primary responsibility of government of a country to her citizens. It is on this premise that the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria makes the provision of security part of the basic functions of government.<sup>5</sup> The second perspective sees the role of government as providing for the economic well being of the citizens because insecurity is believed to stem from poor economic condition of citizens. Hence security is deemed to include all plans put in place to provide for the safety of citizens, property, resources, businesses and the entire country against external aggressors.<sup>6</sup> It is the ability of a government to ward off threats (whether internal or external) to its assets, citizens or territorial integrity.

For Otto and Ukpere, security has a relationship with peace, stability, happiness and absence of threat.<sup>7</sup> Meaningful development can occur only in a peaceful and stable environment as they act as catalyst in the development process. Hence, there are different types of security such as national security, personal security, financial security, marital security, social security, among others.

Insecurity is simply the absence of or inadequacy of security to provide safety for lives and property. It can be defined as the inability of the nation to safeguard her citizens and resources,<sup>8</sup> thereby exposing them to threats, danger and harm. It is a condition in which someone or people are subjected to danger, apprehension, vulnerability and anxiety.<sup>9</sup> This is the state most Nigerians find themselves today because government has not been able to discharge her primary responsibility. The consequences of this attitude include the destruction of life and property, perpetration of crimes of different magnitude and their attendant outcomes.

Insecurity has continued unchecked despite several measures by government to put the negative trend under control. As a result, Nigeria is ranked 146<sup>th</sup> out of 163 on the Global Peace Index for 2021.<sup>10</sup> This makes her one of the least peaceful nations in the world. It is therefore obvious why some countries have warned their citizens against doing business as well as residing in Nigeria.

### **The Concept of Education**

Scholars over time have spilt much ink and dissipated energy in expounding the concept of education. This is due to their different points of view, expectations of education, and cultural or generational differences. This has made education an elusive, vague and slippery concept because it has defied a single universal definition. Hence it has been described as a chameleon that assumes the colour of its immediate environment,<sup>11</sup> because it means different things depending on the social setting or environment.

Education according to Olasehinde-Williams, is as old as human existence and serves as a means of differentiating man from animals.<sup>12</sup> It can be defined from three perspectives: philosophical, sociological and psychological.<sup>13</sup> These views are summarized as the transmission of worthwhile values to the young ones, the teaching of societal norms and helping the child learn the way the society is structured and how it functions.<sup>14</sup> The implication of this is that education produces individuals with the right attitudes and capabilities to live and function effectively in the society. This is because it adds value or worth to those who possess it.<sup>15</sup> This results in the development of the individual and by extension the society, hence education is a prerequisite for sustainable national development.

### **Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria**

The spate of insecurity in Nigeria is attributable, but not limited, to the following:

1. **Weak Security Architecture and Porous Borders:** The security architecture of Nigeria is extremely weak and largely unreliable, partly because of lack of armoury, insufficient personnel and lack of training.<sup>16</sup> As a result we have security personnel who are ill equipped and lack requisite skills, expertise and qualities needed to effectively secure the territorial boundaries of the country. This situation makes the country susceptible to constant unhindered attacks on civilian populations and military formations. Also, our porous borders have in no small measure aggravated the security situation in Nigeria because it serves as a channel for unrestricted influx of illegal immigrants from neighbouring countries.<sup>17</sup> This has also facilitated the inflow of arms used to perpetrate different crimes without restraint in Nigeria.
2. **Unemployment:** Unemployment rate in Nigeria has witnessed a steady rise with a resultant increase in poverty and crime wave. This has been attributed to burgeoning population and the failure of successive administrations to stimulate and encourage the private sector to create employment opportunities.<sup>18</sup> This poses serious problem for national security and by extension sustainable national development, because it breeds more young people who out of desperation have to do anything whether legal or illegal to eke out a living. It is therefore no surprise that the greater proportion of security challenges is caused by unemployed youths.

3. **Corruption and bad Governance:** Governance in other climes is about making decisions and formulating policies that are aimed at improving the welfare of the citizens, even though such decisions and policies may affect a section of the society negatively. But in Nigeria, corruption and bad governance have become the order of the day. To attain political positions, political thugs are recruited and armed to the teeth with sophisticated weapons which are used for armed robbery, kidnapping, etc., when politicians no longer have need for them. Also, the failure of government to provide a conducive environment to stimulate the creation of employment opportunities has created an army of frustrated, disillusioned and unemployed youths who take to crimes.<sup>19</sup> The high level of corruption exhibited by government officials who convert public funds to personal use has further exacerbated the precarious security situation. Again, the uneven distribution of national resources and development has led to agitations in some regions.<sup>20</sup>
4. **Weak Judicial System:** Since there is no perfect or crime free society, laws are instituted to deter people from crime related activities that can constitute security challenge by stipulating punishments for defaulters. It achieves this by attaching sanctions such as fines, community service or even incarceration, etc., to different crimes. This would obviously make the society relatively secured with less crimes, violence or crises. Unfortunately, the judicial system in Nigeria has not lived up to its billing as most perpetrators of crimes roam the streets free, constituting serious security threats to law abiding citizens. In some cases, law enforcement officers have aided and abetted crime either by providing them with weapons and security information, or by not meting out appropriate punishment to defaulters.
5. **Uneven distribution of Wealth and Development:** The marginalization of a section of the population in terms of the distribution of the nation's wealth and resources creates room for discontentment which could snowball into regional agitations that constitute security challenges. It is on this premise that Shebbs and Njoku stated that the sense of deprivation of the citizens' rights and privileges could become the precursor of radicalization and violence.<sup>21</sup> This is obviously the root cause of insecurity in the southern part of the country.
6. **Weak Value System:** The value system of any society affects its developmental strides either positively or negatively. A nation that has a strong value system would achieve sustainable development, while retrogression would become the outcome of a weak or bad value system.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, the erosion of the value system and misplacement of societal values have created a weak value system that is relative and subjective. As a result, while the larger society frowns at social vices and crimes, others derive joy in it and encourage others to become social deviants and misfits.

### Effects of Insecurity on Education

Education in Nigeria has suffered huge setback both quantitatively and qualitatively in the following ways:

1. **Low Enrolment/Increase in Drop Out:** In times of war or serious security crises, parents and guardians would be extremely reluctant to enroll their wards in schools for fear of their safety. Those already enrolled into schools could be forced to drop out, while others could be conscripted into the military, militia or terrorist groups. The effects of

this would be an increase in the number of out of school children and illiteracy rate which would not encourage sustainable development and governance because as noted by Eze, illiteracy robs people of skills and abilities they could use to contribute to the socio-economic and political development of the nation and makes it difficult to govern the people.<sup>23</sup>

2. **Destruction of Education Facilities:** During crises, violence or uprisings, educational facilities such as classrooms, lecture halls, laboratories, offices, etc, are usually destroyed. When this happens, effective teaching and learning would be adversely affected even after normalcy has been restored. Where these facilities are not destroyed, they are converted to internally displaced persons' (IDPs) centres. This creates an environment that is not conducive for education to take place.
3. **Underfunding:** Over the years, Nigeria has not been able to come anywhere close to the United Nations 26% budgetary benchmark for education. The situation would even be worse where there is violence, crises or war, as the need for arms and ammunitions would mean diverting funds meant for education and other sectors to defense. This would result in dearth of requisite facilities and instructional materials for education. It would not make for meaningful learning and the products of such education would not be able to compete favourably on the global stage.
4. **Increase in Poverty:** Education is not only the springboard for national development, but also the main exit route from poverty.<sup>24</sup> Maiyo and Jyoti described poverty from two perspectives – the lack of financial resources, and the absence of the capability to function effectively in the society.<sup>25</sup> This is because education equips one with skills that would make him employable and also help him to become objective, broad and critical minded. This would not be possible if people are unable to access education, rather they would experience a considerable setback. It is therefore not a surprise that insecurity engenders poverty in material, cognitive and affective forms by denying the people access to quality education.
5. **Discourages Female Education:** Traditionally, female enrollment in Nigeria is low in comparison to that of the male, and this accounts for the disparity in their level of literacy.<sup>26</sup> The role of female education cannot be overemphasized because it gives rise to educated mothers who would serve as their child's first teachers as well as contribute to the running of their families.<sup>27</sup> But with the current state of security in the country, especially after the Chibok and Dapchi kidnap incidents, female enrolment in schools, especially in the North would surely nose dive in the crises prone areas. This to a large extent would limit the chances of the females to have equal educational opportunity, thereby making it difficult for them to contribute to national development.

### **Implications of Insecurity for Socio-Economic and Political Development of Nigeria**

The implications of insecurity for the socio-economic and political development of Nigeria include the following:

1. **Loss of Investment Opportunities:** No economy of the world has made significant progress without private investment from within and without. They create employment opportunities, improve the standard of living of the people, and reduce poverty. In other

words, foreign and local investors contribute to the development of a country. But this would not be possible if the country experiences security challenges. In fact some international Oil Companies (IOCs) have been reluctant to relocate their headquarters to their operational bases on the account of insecurity and this has affected the socio-economic development of those regions. Also, the possibility of attracting new investors into the country would be very difficult because no investor would want to plough his resources into an unstable and insecure atmosphere.

2. **Loss of qualified manpower:** The socio-economic and political development of any country is dependent on the aggregation of the input of skilled, trained and qualified individuals who oversee the different aspects of the nation's life. Incidents of violence, crises or wars could result in the death or incapacitation of these individuals whose invaluable knowledge and wealth of experience are needed for the development of the country. Insecurity also encourages brain drain as people flee from areas with security challenges in search of refuge, safety and greener pasture elsewhere.
3. **Morally and Ethically Bankrupt Society:** Education liberates people from the shackles of ignorance, parochialism and superstition, and also prepares them to contribute to the economy and polity of the nation. But according to Nir and Kafle, this would only be possible in an atmosphere that is devoid of security challenges.<sup>28</sup> Insecurity reduces the literacy rate and creates a situation where people would become uneducated and ill-equipped to function effectively, thereby resulting in inefficiency and unproductively. This could lead to the stagnation of the different sectors of the national life as there is a strong relationship between literacy and development.
4. **Political instability:** Security challenges in some parts of Nigeria are as a result of discontentment with the political system. Hence, there is a strong notion that the crises in Nigeria have political undertone. If the security challenges are not properly controlled, it would result in political instability which could worsen the already bad security situation.<sup>29</sup> No meaningful development would take place in an instable and insecure environment, as this can be adjudged as the failure of government to provide security for life and property. In such a situation of defencelessness and helplessness, life would be nasty, brutish and short.

## Conclusion

Insecurity has become one of the major issues that both developed and underdeveloped countries have had to confront and put up with in recent times. It is antithetical to sustainable development as it has profound effects on every facet of the nation's life such as hospitality, education, economy, etc. Education which is a sine qua non for sustainable national development because of its significant role in the socio-economic and political development is one sector that has borne the greater part of the brunt of insecurity in Nigeria. It may be in the form of armed robbery, cultism or gangsterism, kidnapping, militancy, banditry and insurgency. Some promising students have had their lives cut short, others have been badly maimed, traumatized and incapacitated. It has contributed to the increasing number of out of school children as some have had to drop out of school for fear of their safety, while others have become child soldiers. This has a lot of negative implications for education in Nigeria,

and by extension the socio-economic and political development of the nation. This ugly trend calls for the urgent attention of the government and well meaning individuals in the society.

### **Recommendations**

To stem the spate of insecurity in the country and its deleterious effects, the following recommendations are hereby proffered:

1. Policies that would improve the security architecture of the nation should be urgently formulated to ensure that the security agencies have the needed arsenal, personnel and training needed to confront insecurity headlong.
2. The judicial system of the country should be strengthened by punishing corrupt judicial and law enforcement agents, so that it can be alive to its duties, which could ensure that criminals and foot-soldiers of insecurity get the appropriate punishment they deserve.
3. Policies that would stimulate and encourage job creations should be enacted with a view to creating employment opportunities and reducing poverty.
4. The standard of governance should be improved and culture of probity and accountability firmly established. Government at all levels should be responsible for and responsive to the plight of citizens and to ensure fair distribution of the nation's wealth and development.
5. There is the urgent need for moral and ethical reorientation as it would help address ethno-religious crises and corrupt practices.
6. There is need for a strong and functional database of immigrants and citizens to forestall the influx of aliens who are allegedly part of the insurgence and banditry armies in the North.

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