SECURITY CHALLENGES AND SAFETY OF PUPILS EN ROUTE TO SCHOOL IN AYAMELUM LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined security challenges and safety of pupils in Ayamelum LGA of Anambra state. Three research questions guided the study. The design of the study was a descriptive survey and the population consisted 1,798 parents in Ayamelum Local Government Area. The sample of the study was 180 parents was drawn through stratified random sampling technique. The area of study is Ayamelum Local Government Area of Anambra state. A research instrument for the study was a 17 item structured questionnaire developed by the researcher titled Security Challenges En Route To School (SCERTS) with four clusters was used for data collection and was validated by three lecturers, two in the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, and one in Department Of Educational Foundation, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra state. The data collected was used to determine reliability of the instrument using Cronbach alpha reliability test which yielded a reliability of 0.83. The responses were calculated using mean and standard deviation. The finding of the study unveiledthat childrenen route to school; face high level of security challenges caused by governmental and security agencies lapses. It was also revealed that good roads, open school environment and security gadgets would help remedy the situation. The study therefore recommends that government should organise forums, channels and meetings with parents for interactive session and enlightenment and also constantly train security agencies on how to mitigate these security challenges.

Keywords: Insecurity, Security, Security Education, Safety and Security Measures

Introduction

Insecurity in Nigeria has become a persistent cause for worry probably because it is seen as man-made, not a natural cause, yet beyond control. This problematic situation has grown to the extent that the populace is somewhat perplexed and at loss of hope on intervention expected to avert the menace of insecurity. The Nigerian constitution (1999) particularlystated that the government is first and foremost responsible for the security of lives and property of its citizens. However, it is certain that the major challenge of security in Nigeria is the containment of diverse manifestations of violence led by various groups. The groups known as herdsmen, Boko Haram and their sponsors in contemporary

Nigeria have stretched the resources, expertise, patience and even the competence of Nigeria's security apparatuses to the limit, both individually and collectively. It has become most reported news that bandit often lay siege on lonely paths and on the countryside to waste lives and to rape women and children. These hooligans especially in the rural and less busy areas wage cold war against innocent dwellers, engaging in organized criminal expeditions. Terror caused by these groups affects negatively farm activities and also restricts movement on the foot paths and roads, at night and during the day.

Normally, the state of rural area makes it easier for the activities of these bandits to thrive. Rural areas are most of the times characterised by deplorable infrastructure that makes them prone to insecurity. In Alozieuwa (2012) pointed at deplorable conditions, lack of infrastructural facilities, basic services such as electricity, water, health centres, good road networks and educational institutions in the rural setting of Nigeria. According to the scholar all these hinders the process of educating children. Okorie (2011) stated that the challenge posed by these hooligans is not only about the viciousness of either its terror campaigns, or the sect's avowed mission to impose Islamic law on the country, but the uncertainty about the safety of children in primary schools. Bankong-Obi (2012) suggested that the total number of deaths arising from attacks orchestrated by these miscreants far outstrips any other cause of death in Nigeria, including epidemics. Unfortunately, Nigerian government's approach has not rolled back the menace of insecurity thereby creating the impression that little or nothing is done to secure the people or provide safe passage for children going to school (Agaptus, 2013).This development has hampered the issue of access, promoted dropout and scaled down teachers' interest in teaching. Thus, the need to understand concepts like safety, security education and security measure to control crimes, deter threats and promotes safety as children journey to schools. In this discourse on security challenge, the researchers highlight the significance of safe movement to school and for people to work assiduously without fear, in order to enhance academic exercises for the growth and development of the state.

Security is the level of resistance one has from harm. It applies to a person, school, community, nation, or organization. According to Adebayo (2011) security is a measure that ensures peaceful co-existence and development at large. It is seen that with the existence of security, there is absence of fear, threat, anxiety, tension, and apprehension over theloss of life, liberty, property, goals and values. It is vital to come to certain terms with what sort of security is deliberated here, since the term securitycould mean food security, financial security, personal security, energy security, environmental security, cybersecurity, national security, among others (Akhakpe, 2013). But the concern here is about the personal, national and environmental security challenges facing school children en route to school.

Insecurity is termed the opposite of security. Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Robaro (2013) acknowledged some common descriptors used todefine insecurity to include lack of safety, presence of danger, uncertainty, inadequately guarded or protected. Similarly, Iregbenu and Uzonwanne (2015) described insecurity as thestate of distress and anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged dearth of protection. This insecurity nurtures the phenomenon of terrorism. Little wonder why Oriakhi and Osemwingie (2012) purported that domestic terror and other social vices are perpetrated in the absence of strong security structure. The security of school children has become an indispensable issue in this era of pervasive terrorism. This is because schools in the rural areas have been singled out for attack due to available forest hideouts and lonely paths, resulting in the destruction of school properties, rape, deaths and abduction of pupils, teaching and non-teaching staff, leading to prolonged closure of schools. In the view of Egbe (2014), an area with a population of 20,000 people and below is classified as a rural area. In continuation, the scholar concurred that the rural areas lack things like good roads, medical and health facilities, portable water, electricity. People in rural area engage in subsistence or mechanised agriculture. Their standard of living can be very low, earning only a few thousands of naira annually.

There is a huge gap between the enrolment size of children in the rural areas as compared to those in the urban area and the security threat makes it worse. Birdsall, Levine, and Ibrahim (2005) stated that in many countries, the rural/urban education gap is the most important factor explaining education differentials. Also, Nicola, Elizabeth, Nicholas and Banke (2011) confirmed that themarginalised segments of society including the rural areas is 19 out of 45 countries of Africa even though the government and some world bodies took it upon themselves to raise the level of access to primary school in the rural area.Muchaka, Behrens & Abrahams(2011) noted thatmost children of primary school age are discouraged from walking to and from school in some rural area due to situations like dilapidated walking and crossing facilities, fatigue as a result of long walk as well as crime.

Children's safety needs are determined by what transpires between home and school. Thus,Idoko and Dasuma, (2014) stated that the assurance of school safety has become critical for children in the rural area because safe walking paths have been identified as an essential physical element for school children who travel on foot. Likewise, inability to ensure security amounts to injustice, inequality and people's reaction to marginalization (Okorie, 2011). Herdsmen attacks on schools in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States have been massive and devastating beyond the imagination of people. Mohammed (2014) reported that in Borno State, education has been singled out for violent attacks with lethal regularity since early 2012, schools were intentionally attacked to the point where there were no functional schools operating in local government areas invaded and attacked. According to Okorie, (2011) the more depressingthese security challenges is the

despicable and lethal the Islamic sect functioning as terror-group are . The group has claimed responsibility for mayhem experienced within the country in recent times. Nwadialor, (2011) assert the sheer lawlessness and carnage carried out by these renegade have heated up the nation and made the country less secure.

However, insecurity has spread, farther than anticipated, farms, homes and churches are invaded, from one state to another and local government to another. Often, news are received about petty crimes, rape, ethnic/religious killings, armed insurgency, terrorism by Boko Haram and herdsmen sect, massacres and bombings in schools, churches, farms (Daily Sun, 2012). These series of events are common and seen in the north, in places like Maiduguri and other northern cities. Parents and their children are put out of their homes and schools due to insurgence. Iregbenu and Uzonwanne(2015) observed that the indifferent approach of the government in the discharge of its primary responsibility of ensuring security over life and properties especially children in primary schools, can be attributed to their apathy towards quality education for all children. Recent unrests in various states of Nigeria no doubt have roots in the failure of the government policies to provide or manage the basic human physiological needs of their citizens (Oshio, 2009). Nonetheless, it is noteworthy to understand that diffidence amongst primary school children in the rural area, which has not been easy for the state government to handle, is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. Countries like France, Britain, Switzerland, Germany, Russia and United States of America are faced with similar challenges of security on a daily basis. One of the limitations of Nigeria's security issues is its medicine-after-death approach that accords the use of force thus reinforcing the views of Iregbenu and Uzonwanne(2015) of government's indifferent approach.

Movements of children from their homes to school form an important component of learning as children experience diverse types of difficulties en-route to school which can hamper or discourage attendance. In most advanced countries, the mode of transport to school by children is through the use of car, train or school bus. However,Nworgu&Nworgu, (2013) noted that in less developed countries such as Nigeria, over 70% of school children in the rural area, with a population size of less than 20,000 persons, go to and fro schools on foot. As a result, they form close knit group (friends going similar direction), from home to school. So, Muchaka et al., (2011) argued that the considerable amount of time involved in travelling further away from homes increases the chances of victimization while walking. Therefore, it has been reported that parents view the outcome of abduction (kidnapping) or assault as being vastly more hideous than the consequence of non-attendance to school. So, Iregbenu&Uzonwanne (2015) stated thatsafemovement by adults and children to school in the remote areas is given second thought, impeding adequate rudimentary education.

Though the state has full responsibility to protect its citizens from threats and dangers that may possibly be caused by deviants, there is need for parents, school authorities and pupils

to fortify themselves in order to guarantee their security. To achieve this, it is deemed fit for the affected to acquire knowledge and skills on how and when to react to certain security pressures that may emerge in their environments. Security education, according to Idoko and Dasuma (2014) is creating awareness and enlightenment about security issues in an environment. Similarly, Adejoh (2015) asserted that security education is the process of learning to improve one's security consciousness through education for proactive responses to risks and dangers that may crop up in the school, home and in the society at large. Security education is different because it is the creation of the right awareness on people to stimulate them to act appropriately to secure themselves before notifying the right security quarters for speedy intervention (Nwagboso, 2012). Knowing what is and what ought to be done is highly significant in the determination of how school stakeholders ought to operate in the school, knowing quite well that the educational system has become a subject of attack in this era (Alimba, 2016).

For school security measures to be functional, the government might need to advance in technologies. Consistent with Alimba (2018) they are supposed to develop appropriate strategies that will physically enhance the implementation of security or safety policies in schools. Some of the technologies that can be provided in schools and outside the school to deter intruders and promote safe journey to and fro school includes CCTV camera, padlocks, installation of alarms, fencing of school, provision of security gates, lighting systems and metal detectors (Idoko&Dasuma, 2014)). Haruna and Liman (2015) agreed that Installing CCTV in schools, on foot path to school, is a viable instrument to protecting and managing crimes. According to them it reduces threats and ensures that school climate is safe for teaching and learning. Also, more to these measures are promotion of school-community partnership, creating awareness, provision of security guards, moderating entrance into schools, provision of visitors' note and provision of security agencies code numbers for handling emergencies in schools and its environs. School location is likewise an important factor in safe school addresses.

The essence of understanding safety and employing security measures requires promotion of safety and prevention of vulnerable circumstances en routes to school schools. Likewise, elimination of danger en route to school would increase academic desire thereby causing enrolment rate of children. In a situation where children are not safe and are discouraged from attending primary education due to insecurity, it is necessary to look into the challenges facing school children. Anambra state is an area blessed with some natural reserves such as forests especially in the rural areas. There have been some activities of bandits on school children which have claimed many lives. Situations of insecurity triggers traumatic disorder and toxic stress that affect learning negatively. General school attendance and enrolment are equally affected as parents withdraw their children out of schools while in some extreme cases, insecurity has led to closure of schools. For instance, Anambra State schools are shut down on Mondays and on certain days, schools are shut-

down in major towns as a result of activities of unknown gunmen (Ameh,2015). UNICEF (2021) noted that "So far this year 2021, there have been 20 attacks on schools in Nigeria, with 1,436 children abducted and 16 children dead. More than 200 children are still missing (Vanguard, 2021). Therefore, this paper seeks to examine security challenges in journeying to school and safety of pupils in Anambra state.

Statement of the Problem

Primary education is a rudimentary stage of learning for all children, it is expedient that children receive uninterrupted learning in order to reach their full potential as access and undisrupted attendance all gravitates towards the achievement of the national goals. But, when children are alienated from attending this mandatory education due to insecurity, it plants permanent and negative scar in their overall quest for development. Children who failed to attend primary education become academically handicapped because they would be unable to read and write which is necessary for satisfactory existence and progress. The government claim that much work has been put in place to guarantee this; regrettably the problem is still lingering, and children are put in harm's way. Therefore, if reasonable step is not taken, there would be clear decline in the number of children attending primary school. Researches on the safety of school children has always been carried out, however, the circumstances of children in the rural areas of Anambra state has received minimal attention. It is against this bid that the researchers seeks to ascertain security challenges and safety of pupils en route to school in Ayamelum L.G.A. of Anambra state, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine ways of enhancing security challenges and safety of pupils on route to school in Anambra state, Nigeria.
Specifically, this study sought to find out:
1. The causes of security challenges en route to school in Ayamelum L.G.A. of Anambra state?
2. The implications of security challenges facing pupils en route to schoolsAyamelum L.G.A. of Anambra state?
3. The measures for reducing security challenges of pupils en route to school Ayamelum L.G.A. of Anambra state?

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study.
1. What are the causes of security challenges en route to school in Anambra state?
2. What are the implications of security challenges facing pupils en route to school in Anambra state?

3. What are the measures for reducing security challenges of pupils en route to school in Anambra state?

Method

The research design adopted for the study is descriptive survey research design. The area of study is Ayamelum Local Government Area of Anambra state. The choice of the local government area was because data collection relevant to the study will be acquired from local government that has rural characteristics. The population consisted 1,798 parents in Ayamelum local government area. The sample of the study was 180 parents drawn through stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for the study is a 17 item structured questionnaire developed by the researcher titled Security Challenges En Route To School (SCERTS) and is made up of 4 clusters with four response options of Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points) Disagree (2 points), and Strongly Disagree (1 point). Apart from the first cluster that seeks demographic information, the other three clusters are meant to address each of the research question formulated for the study. The instrument was validated by two lecturers in the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education and one from the department of educational foundations both in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra state for face and content validity. Their comments and suggestions were reflected in the final draft of the instrument. The data collected were used to determine reliability of the instrument using Cronbach alpha reliability test which yielded a reliability of 0.83. The responses were calculated using mean and standard deviation. A mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted while item with mean score below 2.50 was rejected.

Result

Research Question One: What are the causes of security challenges facing pupils in Ayamelum L.G.A. of Anambra state?

Table 1: Mean rating of causes of security challenges facing pupils in Ayamelum LGA of Anambra state?

S/N	Causes of security challenges facing pupils in Ayamelum LGA of Anambra state	$\overline{X}$	Decision
1	Economic degradation encourages criminal activities	3.45	Agree
2	Deplorable state of educational infrastructure creates room for dark activities	2.89	Agree
3	Political crises results to insecurity	3.67	Agree

4	Security agents are ignorant of their roles in school children protection	3.00	Agree
5	Non-availability of good road network	3.20	Agree
	Grand Mean	**3.24**	

In table 1 above, the parents with mean scores of 3.45, 2.89, 3.67, 3.00 and 3.20 agreed on the causes of security challenges children face on their way to school. The security challenges includes Political crises and economic degradation, deplorable state of infrastructure, dark activities in bad alleys, Some religious extremist beliefs, Security agents are ignorant of what is happening around them and Unavailability of motor able roads.

Research Question Two: What are the implications of security challenges facing pupils en route to school Ayamelum LGA of Anambra state?

Table 2: Mean rating of the implications of security challenges facing pupils en route to school Ayamelum LGA of Anambra state

S/N	Implications of security challenges facing pupils en route to school in Ayamelum LGA of Anambra state	$\bar{X}$	Decision
6.	Irregular attendance to school results in poor performance of pupils	3.63	Agree
7.	Irregular attendance to school results in increase in dropout of pupils	2.64	Agree
8.	There is loss of life and material resources	2.57	Agree
9.	Security challenges results in poor enrolment and retention of pupils	2.56	Agree
10	Children will get traumatised as a result of insecurity challenges	2.98	Agree
	Grand Mean	**2.77**	

The response of parents shown above indicate that parents agree with most of the implications of security challenges facing pupils en route to school which are irregular attendance to school results in poor performance of pupils, There is loss of life and material resources and children drop out of school. The grand mean is 2.77.

Research Question Three: What are the measures for reducing security challenges of pupils en route to school in Ayamelum LGA of Anambra state?

Table 3: Mean rating of some measures for reducing security challenges of pupils en route to school Ayamelum LGA of Anambra state

S/N	Measures for reducing security challenges of pupils en route to school in Ayamelum LGA of Anambra state	$\overline{X}$	Decision
11	Good governance can ameliorate the challenges	3.87	Agree
12	Provision of proper security gadgets	3.95	Agree
13	Educating security agencies about these challenges	2.67	Agree
14	Enlightening the populace on the need for peaceful coexistence	2.56	Agree
15	Provision of good access road	2.59	Agree
	Grand Mean	**3.12**	

In table 3 above, parents accepted the measures for reducing security challenges of pupils en route to school in Anambra state. Parents with the cluster means of 3.87, 3.95, 2.67, 2.56 and 2.59 agreed that strong and good governance can help ameliorate the challenges, provision of proper security gadgets, educating security agencies about the about these challenges, enlightening the populace on the need for peaceful coexistenceand therefore eradication of political crises, economic degradation, indiscipline, and unemployment and provision of good access road are necessary measures for making journey to school safe.

Discussion

In research question 1, opinion of parents on the causes of security challenges of children on their journey to school suggests that it is a problem hindering fundamental education in the area. Such challenges includes political crises, economic degradation and unemployment, deplorable state of infrastructure, some religious extremist believe that violence and destruction is the only way to achieve heaven, security agents are non challant of what is happening around them and non availability of motor able roads. The study unveiled that criminal activities in the rural area undermine the safety of children thereby dissuading them and their parents from continuing. In support, Idoko and Dasuma(2014) confirmed that the assurance of school safety has become critical for children in the rural area.

In research question 2, Irregular attendance to school results in poor performance of pupils, Some educational institutions operate at low capacity, loss of life and material resources, children drop out of school and loss of huge amount of money every day,areas of the country were seen as some of the implication of the security challenges of children in Anambra state. While poor punctuality results in poor performance of pupils or sometimes withdrawal from school and close down of some educational institutions were not accepted as some implication of security challenges. In fact, parents view the outcome of abduction (kidnapping) or assault as being vastly more hideous than the consequence of non-attendance to school (Iregbenu&Uzonwanne, 2015).

In research question 3, the result of the study show that lots of measures can be utilized to curb the disturbances children face while going to school in the rural areas. Some of these measures include strong and good governance, proper security gadgets in the country, educating security agencies about the state of the problem, eradication of political crises, economic degradation, indiscipline, and unemployment and provision of good access road. According to Agaptus (2013) Nigerian government's approach has not rolled back the menace of insecurity. However, for school security measures to be functional, the government will invest in technologies (Alimba, 2018).

Conclusion

The study identified causes of security challenges of pupils on their journey to school. It showed government's unproductive involvement in politics, economy, employment, infrastructure, some religious extremist beliefs and lapses on security education by security agents which contributes to the problem. If nothing is done, the consequences, according to the finding would result constant reduction in school attendance and completion, thus, unequal opportunity for all children in the national development as stipulated by the National Policy on Education. The government, school and teachers can help provide safe trip to and fro school when there is proper security gadgets, better and current education for security agencies, good access road and eradication of political and economic crises, indiscipline and unemployment.

Recommendations

1. The government should organise forum and channels/ interactive session meeting with parents, teachers/school and security agents on safety matters.
2. Security agencies should receive constant training on security matters of the state.
3. Schools should have their location in open environment to promote safety for pupils en route to school.

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