

Insecurity in Nigerian Schools: Psychological Perspective

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Abstract

The paper discussed the concept of insecurity in schools; it highlighted key concerns on the physical threats, school environmental design and the social climate of the school. The trends of insecurity globally and in Nigeria especially as they affect schools were reviewed. It looked at insecurity in Nigerian schools from a psychological perspective and the necessary steps to reduce the insecurity situation in Nigerian schools were discussed. These include the realistic rehabilitation and psychological aid to the affected students and parents, training and employment of educational psychologists, strengthening of existing security arrangement, creating and developing as well as implementing enabling educational laws and policies specific to school security including standard environmental designs for schools with proper coordination between all the schools' stakeholders together with relevant law enforcement agencies.

Keywords: insecurity, Nigerian, schools, education, psychology

Introduction

Security of life and property is a highly valued goal of any individual, group and government. This goal has been difficult to reach because of various threats and risks to personal lives and community, state, national and global environments. These threats could range from natural, socio-economic and political climate of the individual or state. No society, group or individuals can be one hundred percent secure, hence humans are daily contending with security issues and striving endlessly to attain the desired goal. The developed world often faces both artificial and tragedies natural disasters such as earthquakes, tornadoes, flood and landslides that frequently threaten a substantial part of the globe (Achikasim & Shuaibu, 2020). Scientific and technological development could negatively trigger incidences of diseases and epidemics, mass death including plane crashes, shipwreck, road and train mishaps, building collapse and fire disasters, as opined by Bonzan (2019). On the other hand, Omonijo et al. (2019) saw man's wickedness to his fellow man in form of terrorism, suicide bombing and ritual killing as human-inflicted insecurity against other individuals and the affected society. Within these security threats and happenings to the population of any society/nation, the most vulnerable people to

danger are the children and youths (US Department of Education, 2014). These children and youths are the children of school age in such society.

This reality makes school security a serious concern for parents and guardians who must detach their children and wards from home and entrust them unto the care of the schools. How can parents, guardians, teachers and government institutions guarantee that their children and wards have been reasonably secured in their schools? Such guarantee would enable them concentrate in their daily affairs. But this has become a very difficult question to answer and it is also hard to determine complete security of oneself with that of another. The hard truth currently is that the schools, educational managers and sovereign states have added responsibility to appreciate that security of schools has become more vital than ever before and should be accorded greater attention and priority ever. This is because the security of this group in the population should be the safety of such societies' or nations' future.

The contemporary security situation of Nigerian schools has become one of the most topical issues in the nation today as stated by Obiezu (2021). Cultism among other deviant behaviours such as alcoholism, drug abuse, sexual assault and harassment, armed robbery, ritual murder and recently kidnapping have made the internal and external environments of schools insecure for both students, staff and other stakeholders. According to Owonikoko (2020), schools' security has become so prominent in Nigerian society that politicians have found it a major thrust, upon which they campaign, criticize and attack their opponents to win their supporters' sympathy.

Insecurity in schools especially in the North East region of Nigeria is still a herculean task to the current administration. The "BringBackOurGirls" group which emerged since April 14, 2014 when the Boko Haram terrorist sect in Nigeria abducted over 250 girls from a school in Chibok, Borno State of Nigeria is still existing and soliciting for the release of the remaining girls six years after the abduction as reported by Ogbebo (2014). One would think that April 2014 abduction was the climax of years of incessant killings of innocent students especially in the North East part of Nigeria but that was not to be when the shocking and traumatic news of the Dapchi girls' abduction incident took place. This was another female students' abduction on 19th February, 2018 where more than 100 girls were again abducted from their hostel. The Dapchi girls, unlike the Chibok situation, were returned by the abductors except Leah Sharibu. The returnee students did not come back without tails of ugly experiences, which include the psychological effects, fear, trauma, depression, anger among others. Thinking that the story has ended, another painful one took place in Damba-Kasaya in Chikun Local Government Area in Kaduna State, on 24th August 2020, when JS3 students preparing for their exams after the COVID-19 pandemic holidays were abducted after killing one. The students have not been rescued as the search for their whereabouts is still on-going. Today Nigeria with the assistance of some concerned nations is striving to contain the Boko Haram insurgence in the Northern Region, militias/herdsmen in the North West and other regions of the country. The country as at date is still searching and soliciting for the safe return of some of the abducted ladies.

The government is also encouraging the displaced and frightened students to return back to school. However, the last few months from 2020 – to date has witnessed a dangerous increase on the abduction and seizure of students from their schools, making the frequency seem a normalized nightmare to the citizens.

Consequently, the authors are challenged by the prevailing realities to take a critical look at the insecurity challenge in Nigerian schools from a psychological angle. In this paper therefore, there is an incisive look at the depth and extent of insecurity in Nigerian schools. Insecurity as a concept affects all disciplines, from socio-economic to political affairs; understanding it requires different approaches. The concept of insecurity in schools was clarified, psychological perception of insecurity in schools was also considered and the measures that could be taken to improve school security in Nigeria were postulated.

The concept of insecurity in schools

Security is perceived both objectively and subjectively. At the objective angle, it measures the absence of threat to life, liberty and core values, while subjectively it looks at the absence of fear, anxiety and apprehension of being in danger (Walter & Conchito, 2013). Security viewed from their angle, simply means a state of being safe, free from any form of harm including emotional pain. It therefore goes far beyond being safe from physical danger to all other things from socio-economic to environmental factors that can assure peace of mind to the individual or group which can influence them to realise their ultimate potentials. The complete definition of security would not be limited to just the absence of physical danger but would include the presence of other things/factors that may threaten the socio-economic and political life of individuals/organisations in the society. In the view of the Office of the US Superintendent of Public Instruction (2014), school security “refers to and includes the critical and necessary environment in which effective teaching and learning can take place. School security supports student learning by creating and promoting a physically, emotionally, socially, and academically secure climate for students, staff, and visitors.” This was corroborated by the US National Crime Prevention Council (2003) when they emphasized that school security requires school authorities to evaluate not only physical environment or environmental design and security devices but also the school’s social climate. It sees security as

prevention measures that affect a school’s social climate, such as conflict resolution programs, zero tolerance policies, bullying prevention programs, visitor policies, and community service programs. Security refers to the reinforcement of the school facility with physical hardware, such as cameras, locks, and lighting, and with clear and consistent operating procedures and a communications plan. (National Crime Prevention Council, 2003: 20-21)

Akpuru-Aja (1999) saw security as measuring all policies, laws and institutions put in place to provide for the citizens an assured psychological feeling and freedom from fear of losing core values. From the foregoing, security can be said to be all-inclusive, and drawing inference from UNESCO Conference Report (2015), ‘security is development

and development is all encompassing', therefore, a secure school should be "one in which the total school environment within and outside enables students, teachers, administrators, staff, and visitors to interrelate positively, in a non-threatening manner that reflects the educational mission of the school while fostering positive relationships and personal growth". It can consequently be seen that though physical threat is what most likely comes to mind when discussing school security, school security transcends beyond it, as it is all-encompassing to include the socio-cultural, religious, ideological, economic and political environment of the school which can clearly be observed manifesting mainly through the human interactions in and outside the school that would lead to the positive achievement of the purpose of teaching and learning in the school.

Insecurity in Nigerian schools

Developing nations especially Africa has been witnessing socio-political differences, diverse ideologies and ethno-religious conflicts which have characterized their relationships leading to various acts of terrorism. This interaction, often misunderstood, seems to the authors to have laid foundation that has made the North Eastern part of Nigeria a volatile environment for habitation and socio-economic relationships especially education. The socio-economic and political differences in Africa which have resulted to conflicts and crisis in some parts of the continent such as Libya, Mali, Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Central African Republic, Somalia, Kenya, Eritrea among others, have made the African continent susceptible to different forms of ideologies, some very extreme and replicating countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan where the Taliban reigns supreme. These extreme ideologies today have found its adherents in Nigeria, that education in the North Eastern part of Nigeria has been severely disrupted, especially in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states. Educational system in the region has been seriously distorted and truncated to the extent that innocent students are gruesomely slaughtered and abducted regularly. Another painful experience took place in Damba-Kasaya in Chikun Local Government Area in Kaduna State, on 24th August 2020, when the JS3 student preparing for their exams after the COVID-19 pandemic holidays were abducted after killing one. In the same year, on 20th December 2020, over 80 pupils of Islamiya School in Mahuta Kaduna were also abducted. These continued kidnapping and abduction of students within this space of time, when added to the over 104 girls who were abducted from their hostel in Dapchi Yobe State on 19th February 2018 and of over 250 school girls from Chibok, on April 14, 2014 in Borno State which caused a world outrage, according to Adamu et al. (2018), are enough to make the citizens and students leave in apprehension daily. This ugly incident has continued with the kidnap of 344 students from Government Science Secondary School, Kankara in Katsina State by Boko Haram on December 2020, though released after some days. Thinking that would be the last of such incident from the concern shown by the federal and State Government then, but the worst seem to be happening frequently when another occurred with the kidnapping on 17th February 2021, of over 42 Government Science College staff and Students in Kagara, Niger State; just few days after, on 26th February 2021, 279 girls of Government Secondary School Jangebe, Kebbi State had their turn. The counting continues, on 11th March 2021, 39 Students of Forestry College Afaka in Kaduna, became the next victim,

while on 23rd April 2021, by 8.15pm, 23 staff and students of Greenfield University in Kaduna were kidnapped with some killed days after and dumped in bushes. All these acts are being perpetrated by criminal elements referred to as bandits, unknown gunmen, Boko Haram etc. These horrifying and terrifying incidents could be more than enough to create psychological apprehension to any school community and among education stakeholders.

These abductions together with other heinous crimes against humanity attracted the whole world's attention like in 2012 when the Taliban in Pakistan shot a school girl, Malala Yousafzai, in the head for leading the campaign for girl-child education. As reported by Olusola (2018), Malala's case triggered world anger and outcry against terrorist acts especially terror against innocent children which is deterring and scaring them from going to school. The survival of Malala from the gunshot wound turned her to a heroine campaigning for peace and non-violence against innocent children all over the world. She was honoured in 2013, by the United Nations when they created a World Malala Day to make the world remember the heinous attack on her and trials of girl-child education. This Malala has visited Nigeria in 2017 to commiserate with abducted girls and family while soliciting for the unconditional release of the girls yet to be freed from the Chibok school abduction as well as draw attention to the education crisis created by the kidnappings and abduction. These she stated on her interview with CNN in 2017. The Boko Haram sect responsible for the abduction declared Western education as evil and has unleashed a sustained and bloody war against the Nigerian North Eastern educational system and government where, according to UNICEF Report in 2017, they have killed over 2,295 teachers, displaced 1900 citizens and destroyed over 1400 schools in the North East of Nigeria as at 2009. This has spread to the North West and other parts of Nigeria by other groups referred to as bandits and unknown gunmen.

These insecurity environment as mentioned above is not limited to North Eastern Nigeria alone; there are other parts of Nigeria that share from this insecure school environment but not in the magnitude described above, except for Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara and Benue States recently where militiamen seem to be having field day in the killing and displacement of communities. These areas include the North Central, South West, South East, and the South South regions where students are abducted in exchange for cash or for ritual reasons. In Ilara in Ogun state, on 15th June 2015, a student of Abeokuta Polytechnic was kidnapped and killed for ritual sacrifice in a shrine as reported by Aluko (2020). Equally, other occurrences added to the insurgency like clashes between nomadic herdsman and farmers, boundary and land disputes between communities, flooding and other disasters in Nigeria have done so much damage to schools and educational developments in Nigeria. These have made securing Nigerian schools a multifaceted one, far beyond securing other institutions or communities thereby creating negative consequences to the growth and development of education in Nigeria. Among these negative consequence of the insecurity situation in schools in the North Eastern States include murder of innocent students in cold blood, physical destruction of school buildings and facilities, distortion of the school academic calendar, abandonment of the

homesteads by the individuals and community for safety, apprehensive living and studying by students and parents in places where schools do exist. Again some students affected by insurgency may decide never to return back to school in future and the incessant disruption of normal living due to measures often put in place by the existing governmental security organisations. The mentioned consequences of insecurity to schools in Nigeria have often raised concerns on the future of education among stakeholders as regards not only the physical and infrastructural effects but including the psychological impacts of the negative consequences on the students and society in general.

The above have according to Wokocho (2014), necessitated key concerns of school security which he summarized thus:

- **Threat to life** – this can be in form of physical attacks or harm from persons within the school.
- **Natural environment** – this is concerned with the safety of students with regard to location of schools including adequate and inadequate facilities of the school and weather conditions.
- **Design issues** - Design issues entails protecting the physically challenged children by providing adequate facilities for their comfort and the quality and aesthetic beauty of the environment as well as hygiene issues against infectious diseases and epidemics.
- **School climate** – here the consideration is on the individuals involved in the teaching and learning process such as the students, teachers, other school staff, the school administration and school-community relations. The human relationship should be free of hate, discrimination, segregation, and ideological divide.

These propositions could be useful tips for planning for the establishment and protection of schools from avoidable danger. Among the lessons is that there should be sustainable cooperation between the school system and law enforcement agencies and intelligence arm of government. These have made it necessary to emphasize on preventive measures which could be considered cheaper than fighting the crime when the head is already off.

Psychological perceptions of insecurity

Psychological theories seem to define security as an essential basis for human survival and living. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1970), the need for security is one of the most important human needs. Along with meeting basic survival needs (such as food and water), Maslow believed that human beings need to cultivate a sense of security on physical wellness, financial stability, and freedom from traumas in order to maintain psychological wellbeing. Individuals who do not satisfy the need for security, according to Maslow, can experience high levels of stress and become less interested in pursuing higher levels of human needs, such as the need for social recognition and intimacy with others.

Attachment Theorist, such as Bretherton (1992), also argued that the need for security is crucial for human survival. They held that early bonding with caregivers is a necessary component of healthy child development and defined this emotional bonding, or “attachment,” as a secure base from which children can face later challenges in life. Generally, a responsive, loving, and persistent caregiver tends to help develop a secure sense of attachment within the child, who is, in turn, likely to develop an internal perception of the self as confident, competent, and worthy of love and attention, (Bowlby & Parkes, 1970). In contrast, a neglecting, distant, and inconsistent caregiver is likely to develop an insecure attachment within the child, who may come to view the world as a dangerous place and grow up feeling unwanted, unworthy, or incompetent.

Thus, modern psychology generally holds that the sense of security is an essential ingredient of a happy life (Eeden et al., 1996). Security therefore implies a sense of empowerment that allows individuals to believe they can be safe and free of danger in the world. As human beings who are inclined to survive, Dawes, Tredoux and Feinstien (1989) believe that everyone is driven by instinctual needs to maximize available resources as well as sense of security in order to be physiologically and psychologically healthy and happy. Maslow's hierarchy of needs portrayed human needs as sequential and hierarchical, suggesting that one can achieve ultimate happiness by fulfilling each level of needs. From the above, the absence of any level of these needs as a result of insecurity would lead to unhappiness and lack of fulfillment, psychological problems of fear, lack of confidence and stress due to denial of emotional bonding between parents and peers within the family and school environment respectively.

Insecurity in schools experienced mainly in the North Eastern Nigeria currently due to the insurgency acts of Boko Haram terrorists is quiet disturbing. All attention and emotions seem focused on the question of physical harm and threat to life by persons or groups who are determined to kill and maim others. It is necessary to explain here that security has several dimensions that deserve attention, especially the psychological angle to its negative impacts to education and the society. For instance, poor designs of school environment can expose students to serious dangers, stress and health hazards including epidemics and other life-threatening experiences. Kin et al. on their own stated that negative human relations in school equally can be harmful to the individual students' mental and emotional growth and development. They also added that attitudes and actions that promote hate could damage the students' self-perception and predisposed them to violence and intolerance at the moment or later in life due to their exposure to violence. Sex abuse, rape and molestation of children also remain high in the schools invaded by terrorists; these pose danger faced by children at school making it and other related crimes of child trafficking a huge issue. There is also the issue of homosexuals and same-sex marriage which has blown across the African continent leading the national legislative houses of various countries to enact laws criminalizing the acts. The schools are often not shielded from these forms of sexual pervasion as some of the children may be introduced to these practices at school by fellow school mates or even adults within the school system. All these constitute insecurity in schools.

One example was in 1986, where four squatter communities near Crossroads in the Western Cape of South Africa were burnt to the ground. A number of people were killed, many were injured and 70,000 left homeless. These people were exposed to weeks of episodic violent conflict and major material loss; many of them were relocated. Dawes, Tredoux and Feinstein (1989) studied the impact of this event on black Xhosa-speaking children under the age of eighteen. They were concerned with symptoms of psychological distress and the attitudes of the children toward the protagonists in the conflict. The subjects were divided into three age groups (2 to 6 years; 7 to 11 years; and 12 to 17 years) and a distinction was made between boys and girls. Parents reported on symptoms of emotional, conduct and physical disorders that had not been present before the attacks, but were present two months thereafter. Stress symptoms were displayed by 32.4% of the children and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) could be diagnosed for 9.2% of the children. Proportionally, more boys than girls had symptoms in the youngest age group; boys and girls were similar in middle childhood; by adolescence girls had the higher incidence of symptomatic behaviour. Fears were the most frequent symptom across all age groups and for both sexes with the most frequently expressed fear being of security-force personnel. Next most frequent across all age groups were changes in emotional expression. Sleep problems occurred in the case of children under seven years old, while they were regression for children under 12 years old and somatic complaints for children older than 11 years. The data also indicated that children whose mothers were diagnosed as having PTSD were significantly more likely to have multiple symptoms of stress. Their study also indicated that the children's views of those responsible for the political conflict were shaped by their exposure to the conflict.

Magwaza, Killian, Peterson and Pillay (1993) also conducted a study among preschool children (2 to 7 years) in the informal settlements inland of Port Shepstone in KwaZulu-Natal. A distinction was made between children from an area with relatively fewer incidents of political violence and those from an area that experienced many incidents of severe violence. Crèche teachers were used to gather the data and at the same time they were trained as counsellors. This involved the ability to identify children who are severely traumatized for referral to professional mental health workers as well as basic counselling skills that they could use to assist children and their caregivers. Children were evaluated for the presence or absence of 12 diagnostic criteria for PTSD. Less than four symptoms were regarded as normal, between four and six symptoms as mild and more than seven symptoms as severe. Drawings by the children were evaluated in terms of 13 emotional indicators and the contents scored in terms of five categories, for example many people running away. Less than four emotional indicators were regarded as normal, four to eight as mild and more than nine emotional indicators as severe. Eighty-eight percent of the children from the area with the greater incidence of violence displayed four or more post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms while 55% of the children from the less violent area displayed four or more symptoms. Most of these could be classified as mild. The frequency of PTSD symptoms was evenly distributed between boys and girls. The analysis of the drawings indicated that 84% of the children drew action figures associated with violence. The children with many emotional indicators on their drawings were,

however, less likely to suffer from PTSD while those with relatively fewer emotional indicators on their drawings were more likely to be categorized as suffering from PTSD as was upheld by Nwankwo et al. (2010) in their work on the prevalence of anti-social behaviours in schools.

These results and findings have important implications for the Nigerian Educational system especially educational psychologists and governments to whom it has become necessary to develop trauma intervention programmes to manage the Nigerian situation. Drawing inference from the South African experience and comparing with the Nigerian contemporary insecurity situation in schools, the psychological implications of the violence in the schools might be more considering that the one above lasted for weeks while that of Nigeria has been on for years, covering different states and still ongoing. Students have witnessed their colleagues/parents and relations being maimed with dangerous objects, killed like animals, raped or kidnapped/abducted, their school buildings destroyed and burnt. The post-traumatic stress disorder, emotional and physical disorder need to be identified and measures put in place to psychologically deal with the issue. It is like a growing and nurturing bomb waiting for its time of explosion if not nipped in the bud today and redirected aright. Frustration-Aggression-Displacement Theory proposed by Dollard, Miller, Mowrer, and Sear (1939) and further developed by Miller (1941) and revised by Berkowitz (1969), would be a reality here unless urgent measures are taken to arrest the situation. The theory attempts to give an explanation as to how frustration can lead to aggressive behaviours. Frustrations, to them cause aggression especially when the source of the frustration cannot be challenged; the aggression gets displaced out on an innocent target.

Using the South African case as a reference to imagine the Nigerian situation, these affected teenagers and youths must now be faced with frustrations, material hardship and crime, because they were over-exposed to violence and the majority have been psychologically distressed and in dysthymia (chronic depression, fear, lack of confidence, negative self-regard and feelings of anger should be common among them). It is made worse as they cannot challenge the source of their frustration or anger (Boko Haram); this might be displaced towards innocent targets. Should this be the case, there is an urgent need for conscious and deliberate effort to be made to bring the children close and be encouraged to externalize their trauma in order to begin the process of psychological reconstruction. The Nigerian State, the regional governments and relevant stakeholders need to rise to the occasion and plan how to intervene and arrest the situation before it gets out of hand by engaging educational psychologists, counsellors and educational planners through focusing on the cognitive, motivational or behavioural factors involved in a child suffering from violence-related stress. The parents, all educational stakeholders and educational institutions should not be left out in this, as the plan should be holistic. This could be achieved through the application of cognitive behavioural modification which is the combination of thoughts and attitudes that influence motivation such as reinforcement and rewards by the right professionals. The behavioural model approach which suggests that all behaviours are learned and can be unlearned could also be applied.

This is a challenge before the contemporary Nigerian government, states and stakeholders, which is achievable when the interest of the future generation, peace and development of the nation today and tomorrow is supported by the political will to do so.

The way forward

The contemporary security situation in schools can be improved in Nigeria through a series of strategies which may include:

- **Provision of the enabling school security laws** – With the growing disquiet about security in Nigerian schools, it has become essential for the National Assembly to take particular interest in enacting or strengthening the existing laws that relate to school security such that such law can be obtained in a single document and distributed to all individuals, parents, guardians and agencies that have something to do with school security. This is a necessary step because without a legal foundation, it may be impossible to implement it in the contemporary Nigerian system. A good legal backing would avoid a similar situation when the courts were unable to award stiff penalties to convicts of internet fraud, kidnapping and even terrorism because it was found that Nigeria did not have laws specific to these offences. This made it possible for the convicts to escape with lesser penalties. Though, some states recently took action/decisions in that direction. Therefore, the handiness of such law will raise consciousness and make stakeholders more accountable and liable for school security gaps.

- **Committed rehabilitation and trauma intervention programme for the affected students and parents** – The burning of school buildings, killing, hurting of students, kidnapping of school children and other inconceivable crimes inflicted upon the school children in the states affected by the insurgency have seriously injured the psyche of the innocent children. This calls for a psychological rehabilitation of the surviving students mentally, emotionally and socially; and this cannot be done by verbal advice or admonition alone. The concerned children need to be observed as persons who are sick mentally and therefore require professional and proper rehabilitation which must be handled by professionals. The effect of the trauma suffered by the children under the insurgency should never be underrated or treated lightly hence there is a compelling need for a cautious and devoted intervention programme and reintegration for the affected students.

- **Training and provision of educational psychologists/counsellors** – The current insecurity situation and attempts to return the students back to school by the government in the affected areas have made it necessary for the training and deployment of specialists with professional knowledge. These are individuals with the ability to observe, identify and modify abnormal behaviours where it exists. They will make counselling and psychological services available for pupils, parents and communities. Government should make it a policy that every school must have educational psychologists/counsellors while mechanism needs to be put in place to train and encourage students to embrace such challenges in the future as well as forgetting the past.

- **National educational policy on school security** – The National Council on Education in particular, which is the highest policy making body in education, should anchor, prompt and host summit, debates, campaigns and finally the development of a

National Policy on School Security. Before this time, little interest has been shown to issue of school safety but with the persistent loss of lives and the unimaginable conditions of schools that destroy the physical, mental and emotional security of the children, it has become very essential to bring school security to the frontline of national and educational dialogue.

- **Standard environmental design in schools** – School design which includes location, standard infrastructure and facilities, support for the physically challenged, hygiene amongst others is very critical in ensuring that a school is secure. It is disheartening that many Nigerian schools at all levels are characterized by infrastructural decay or absence of qualitative environment. Some are located in places that expose them to attacks without good fencing while others are in areas that thrive in cultism. Good roads and beautiful surrounding, recreational facilities and other basic facilities that define a secure school are lacking in many Nigerian schools. Some schools do not even have basic things such as decent toilets and good drinking water thereby exposing the children to epidemic and diseases. Poor funding and corruption are often blamed for this, but until such environmental deficiencies and poor standards are addressed, the schools cannot be said to be secure enough for teaching-learning experience.

- **Proper coordination between the school and community, Directorate of State Service and other law enforcement agencies** – In view of the extent of the negative effect of insecurity on the educational climate, prevention and intervention programmes should be coordinated on a national level to ensure a proper learning environment in all Nigerian schools. The educational authorities should work collaboratively with law enforcement agencies at the community, state and national levels to establish and manage mechanisms that would be effective enough to protect the children at school. A good example could be the American Centre for Threat Assessment and National Crime Prevention Council and other similar European mechanisms of partnership between schools and national law enforcement agencies to contain crimes against the schools and the nation at large. This partnership pressed for two answers to the central questions, which were: ‘Could we have known that these attacks were being planned? And, what could we have done to prevent these attacks from occurring? To answer these questions, the Secret Service in 1998 established and dedicated a National Threat Assessment Center to handle threats while the Department of Education created a Safe and Drug-Free Schools Programme. With the two working together they were able to reduce the ugly occurrence in the US.

If these steps are painstakingly implemented by the stakeholders in the Nigerian educational system, the schools will become a secure place for qualitative teaching and learning experience once again.

Conclusion

Security challenges in schools are a complex and global issue which schools suffer or face at different times and dimensions. While in Nigeria, the issue of school security has been in the front burner due to the recent attacks on schools and school children by the Boko Haram terrorist organisation. School security will continue to be seen both from the angle

of physical harm occasioned by attackers from within or outside the schools as well as from the angles of good school environmental design and supportive school climate on the whole. However, it goes beyond physical harm to include psychological consequences of stress, anger, fear, frustration and depression which in most cases are worse than the physical. The solution to the raging insecurity facing schools in Nigeria therefore calls for concerted efforts of all stakeholders and not just the government or school authorities, but also parents and individuals alike. Insecurity in Nigerian schools can be reduced and its learner-friendly posture returned when committed efforts and strategies as stated above are applied.

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