INSECURITY AND EDUCATIONAL INSTABILITY IN NIGERIA: THE WAY FORWARD

Being a Lecture delivered by
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Introduction

I began my career as a teacher so I am naturally inclined to academia and grateful for the opportunity to deliver a lecture on this auspicious occasion. Insecurity is a global issue with conflicts between Ukraine and Russia which has been ongoing since February 2022, Israel-Hamas since October 2023, the Sudan war, and the total collapse of governance in Haiti. Insecurity is present in all countries to varying degrees as presented by the Global Peace Index where Nigeria ranks 144th of 163 countries.

The Prime Minister of Slovakia was recently shot which underscores the micro level at which insecurity prevails. Crime statistics even in the most developed countries can be alarming while the effort to curb insecurity is often met with mixed results across countries. It is important to understand insecurity from a global perspective because it brings clarity to local circumstances. Recently, myself and 9 other Nigerian governors visited the United States Institute of Peace where we discussed the issue of insecurity in Nigeria at great length. The outcome of that symposium informed some of the interactions between the United States government officials and their Nigerian counterparts when they visited Abuja shortly after.

Insecurity in Nigeria has evolved over time. At one point, Nigerians must have felt insecure from the presence of the British colonialist. After independence, military coups became a source of fear for the nation alongside other activities. A civil war ensued in 1967 with the attempt of a separatist movement to form Biafra in the South East.

There were times highway robberies were the greatest cause of concern for Nigerians because that was when they felt most insecure especially when travelling at night. They remain a concern but now they worry about being kidnapped for ransom. Lagos dealt with waves of home robberies for decades which gradually reached Abuja. The digitization of our banking system meant less cash was carried or kept at home leading to a decline in home robberies. However, kidnappings have been on the rise as they are more lucrative for criminals. Theft and other types of criminalities still exist and these are largely prevalent in all societies. Conflicts between farmers and herders and between Muslims and Christians all led to insecurity in different states across the country over the decades. These conflicts remain a major source of concern for government in its effort to bring peace and security to the people.

A key turning point for security in Nigeria was the emergence of Boko Haram. The topic of discussion today which is the link between security and education can be encapsulated with the

activities of the violent, terrorist group which started in Maiduguri, Borno state. The assault of the group on modern day academic theories and mixed gender schools led to a massive radicalization of young men across the state. When the events of 2009 concluded with the death of their leader, the security landscape in Nigeria changed forever.

The fight against Boko Haram would see the military occupy vast parts of the Northeast in an effort to fight an ideological insurgency which displaced entire local governments and their inhabitants. One of the major consequences of such displacement was the closure of schools in those locations and a poor plan to ensure that displaced children had access to education. The abduction of the Chibok Girls brough a large scale direct attack on education by the insurgents and saw the rise of schools and students becoming targets in what was an already deadly and destabilizing situation for the sector.

With relative calm in the Northeast, the Northwest started to experience a different type of insecurity. Analyst have linked

insecurity in the Northwest to the migration of criminal elements from the Northeast. Insecurity evolved from being an ideological endeavor to a pure criminal enterprise driven by greed and grievances. Kidnappings and cattle rustling by armed bandits is now a multibillion Naira industry as communities split their allegiances between bandits and government.

Unfortunately, schools and students have continued to be victims of insecurity in this development. Students in Katsina, Zamfara, Sokoto, and Kaduna have all been abducted and some are yet to return to their loved ones. In a recently concluded baseline study of the education sector in Katsina state, the data showed that over 10% of schools are completely abandoned due to insecurity and in some instances the bandits have taken over the buildings. Parents are increasingly afraid of sending their children to school and where they have the courage, the schools might be completely destroyed.

Distinguished guests, we are at the nexus between insecurity and education and the there is hope for a better future. This lecture will contextual insecurity and instability in the education sector as we seek a way forward for the sake of future generations. Education is the key to fighting insecurity and success in this areas can change the tide in the very difficult war with banditry and other forms of criminality.

Contextual Definitions

Insecurity

We must first conceptualize security in order to have a better understanding of the idea of insecurity. Security, as defined by Omede (2012), is a dynamic situation that encompasses the ability of the state or nation to fend off any threats to its core interests and values. According to Ewetan and Urhie (2014), security also refers to the lack of dangers to a country's political and socioeconomic goals, as well as its peace, stability, cohesiveness, and integration. For Eloh (2019), security as defined by Achumba, Ighomereho,

and Akpor-Robaro (2013) include protection from crime (feeling safe), predictability of daily life (knowing what to expect), and freedom from psychological harm (safety or protection from emotional stress, which results from the assurance or knowing that one is wanted, accepted, loved, and protected in one's community or neighborhood and by people around).

Conversely, insecurity refers to a feeling of worry or anxiety brought on by a real or perceived lack of safety (Beland, 2005). Stated differently, it alludes to insufficient or nonexistent safety against harm. This concept is constrained since it concentrates solely on bodily insecurity as a type of insecurity and does not include other types of insecurity, such as social and economic instability. Despite this drawback, it is important to emphasize that physical insecurity-which endangers both people and property—poses a greater threat to the education sector than any other of its kind as anyone suffering from insecurity may become depressed, fearful,

uneasy, oppressed, lose focus, and lose their humanity (Ozoigbo, 2019).

Instability in Education

Literally, education is the process of imparting knowledge and skills to people in order to shape their behavior and make them productive members of society. On the other hand, instability denotes being erratic and unpredictable. Primary and secondary schools, universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, and other educational establishments are hubs for the development of knowledge and skills. These educational establishments are supposed to provide their students with the information and ability they need to succeed or excel in their chosen fields in a calm and hassle-free setting. An environment of instability makes it impossible for educational institutions to be progressive, predictable, sustainable, and stable.

An unstable educational system is reflected in a number of disruptions, such as extended breaks, abrupt or intermittent cessation of academic activity, delay in resuming classes, and temporary or permanent closure of schools. We define educational instability as alterations to educational policies, either across the board or within a specific subsystem. In an environment where the safety of people and their property is ensured, teaching and learning is improved. It is believed that learning in society is improved in well-secured environments free from security concerns (Akintunde & Selzing-Musa, 2016).

Forms of Insecurity in Nigeria

Insecurity in Nigeria takes many different forms among which following stand out:

i. Terrorism: Terrorism is one of the security challenges Nigeria has today. The terrorist organization Boko Haram has been terrorizing Nigerians in the Northeast

and beyond since 2009. This group's belief that some forms of western education are against the teachings of Islam may help to explain why, in an effort to dissuade western education, it has been targeting and kidnapping schoolchildren.

ii. Armed Banditry: According to Yusufu (2022), armed banditry originated as a resource-based conflict between sedentary crop producers and nomadic cattle herders. Nowadays, it has developed into a criminal operation that engages in armed robberies, abduction, market raids, village raids, and livestock rustling, among other crimes. The nation's socioeconomic progress continues to be gravely endangered by the actions of armed bandits. This form of insecurity which also targets school children is the greatest challenge facing the Northwest region.

iii. Another form of security challenge that has continued to threaten both educational stability and national security in Nigeria is the perennial conflict between

farmers and herders, especially in the North-Central region of the country. States like Benue, Plateau, and Nasarawa have been reduced to theatres of violent confrontations between these two groups.

iv. Militancy: Udoh (2015), who drew inspiration from the country's penal code, conceptualized militancy among others, as violence, the use of unlawful force, the unlawful use of unjustified force, or the intimidating effect that results from the threat of using such force. The criminal operations of the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) and Niger Delta militants have put human lives and property in danger in the South-East and South-South regions, respectively, in recent years.

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

Nigerian insecurity is attributable to a variety of reasons, some of which are interrogated hereunder:

i. Poverty and unemployment: Insecurity in Nigeria is mostly caused by poverty and unemployment. Every

year, millions of young Nigerians graduate from higher educational institutions across the nation with no chance of obtaining the increasingly difficult to obtain white-collar employment. Many Nigerian graduates start hitting the streets of the country's largest cities in quest of jobs that aren't easily available after completing the mandatory one-year national youth service program. When they can't find work, some of these young people get frustrated and start looking for other ways to make ends meet. Some of them turn to illegal crimes like armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, and computer fraud, among others. Poverty and the ensuing lack of food and basic amenities, as noted correctly by Egbefo and Salihu (2014), lead the impoverished to engage in violent and antisocial behavior, endangering the security of the Nigerian state.

ii. Weak/feeble security architecture: This is another factor contributing to the nation's insecurity. It is sad to

note that the security personnel who confront terrorists and other criminal elements are poorly motivated, lack adequate training and retraining, with no access to advanced weaponry that would allow them to take on criminal organizations such as armed bandits and Boko Haram, among others. It is undeniable that non-state actors with a motley crowd, like members of Boko Haram, possess more advanced weaponry than Nigerian security personnel. The absence of coordination among security agencies fighting insecurity is also seen as a weak point in the nation's security architecture. The fact that enormous sums of money made available for the purchase of weapons have been embezzled and mismanaged, with the offenders not receiving enough punishment, is also concerning (Ozoigbo, 2019).

iii. Nigeria's porous borders: The porosity of the nation's borders is also said to be a contributor to the ongoing insecurity in the country. People

enter and exit Nigeria at will and without detection due to the country's extremely porous land borders. Additionally, some people enter the nation under the cover of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol on Transhumance while disguising as cattle herders. Once inside, they bring extremely dangerous small arms and light weapons (SALWs), which they later use to plan attacks on Nigerians within their own nation (Hazen & Horner, 2007; Adeola & Oluyemi, 2012).

iv. Substance abuse: Abuse of drugs or other substances also fuel insecurity. Drug misuse is a major problem in Nigeria where a large number of young people abuse alcohol, marijuana, and other hard drugs. When these narcotics are abused, young people become more susceptible to crime and are easily recruited by criminal gangs.

Ignorance and illiteracy: These twin two factors also contribute to Nigeria's insecurity. Aghedo and Eke (2015) assert that a major contributing factor to the

violent conflicts in northern Nigeria is the pervasive illiteracy brought on by subpar education. These poor people with no education are prone to manipulation by conflict entrepreneurs and desperate politicians who may use them for criminal political intimidation and other forms of insecurity. The ignorant and illiterate constitute criminality in all parts of the country regardless of ethnicity.

Marginalization: In Nigeria, as in most other African nations, there is an increasing disparity between the rich and the poor in terms of wealth and marginalization. The current economic hardship in Nigeria makes it difficult for many Nigerians to get by. An individual has a limit to how much suffering or adversity they can withstand before turning to criminality as a response. Political marginalization has been the cause of instability brought on by unrest among young people, agitations, and kidnappings in south-south and south-eastern Nigeria.

VII. Ethnic and Religious Intolerance: This is another factor that contributes to Nigeria's insecurity. The nation is diverse in terms of language, ethnicity, and religion and it is home to approximately 350 distinct ethnic groups, as well as the two main religions of Islam and Christianity. Instances of ethno-religious conflict have occured in states such as Delta, Plateau, Benue, Kaduna and Kano.

v. **Poor leadership or governance: The problem of poor leadership or governance is also regarded as contributing to Nigeria's instability. In his book "*The Trouble with Nigeria*," Chinua Achebe argued that the primary challenge facing Nigeria is lack of effective leadership rather than anything intrinsic to the country's geography, environment, or even political structures. There are strong individuals and powerful institutions in developed nations like China, the United States of America (USA), France, Germany, and Britain,**

among others. In Nigeria, on the other hand, we have strong individuals and poor institutions! Additionally, the Nigerian government has failed to provide favorable business climate, employment opportunities, and the infrastructure needed to attract foreign investment and therefore undermine the nation's socioeconomic development. The government's inability to provide social amenities for the populace is due to corruption. Nigeria has an abundance of material and human resources, but the vast majority of its citizens live in poverty. Funds designated for project implementation are typically embezzled into the personal pockets of influential people for personal gains. The lack of effective leadership and a high standard of living for the populace demoralizes and frustrates the majority, which ultimately leads to violent crises and instability.

Does Nigerian education instability correlate with insecurity?

One of the biggest obstacles to Nigeria's socioeconomic progress is insecurity. The stability of the education sector is contingent upon the absence of property and human security. In actuality, Nigeria's educational institutions have been most negatively impacted by insecurity recently. The majority of schools lack a secure, well-fenced area. There are not enough properly armed and qualified security guards to keep an eye on these kids and their teachers. According to Amakiri (2023), insecurity has the following repercussions on the educational system :

(a) Manpower Shortage: An institution's quality is largely based on the caliber of its faculty. Because of Nigeria's security challenges, many professional teachers have lost their lives, which has had a negative impact on educational institution's administration. Jacob (2021) said that since insurgency began in 2009, Boko Haram has killed 2,300 teachers in north-eastern Nigeria, citing data from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This implies that the quality of

education is badly impacted, and as a result, the industry will have to deal with the issue of insufficiently qualified professional teachers.

(b) Low Quality of Education: In many parts of Nigeria, school closures are regular due to insecurity. A school is promptly and permanently closed whenever it is attacked or threatened. Teachers find it challenging to cover their curricula as a result of the schools' sporadic closures, which has an impact on the standard of instruction and the graduates these institutions produce. Due to insecurity, schools are typically closed in a number of places, including Zamfara, Borno, Kano, Katsina, and Kaduna. When the schools do reopen, the pupils are required to retake exams. Graduates created by insecurity ultimately lack the necessary knowledge and skills to function in the job, as Paul (2015) correctly pointed out.

(c) Closure of Educational Institutions: In order to prevent additional attacks, the governments of several states, particularly those that face security challenges, have

resorted to closing educational institutions. School closures not only negatively impact the quality of education but also impede the free flow of academic activity.

(d) Internal Learner Displacement: Students are internally displaced as a result of Nigeria's insecurity, particularly in the northern region. Due to insecurity, a large number of kids have been internally relocated from their schools. In order to survive, some of the displaced students and their parents have turned to living in camps for internally displaced people (IDPs), which lack sufficient social facilities and security personnel.

Impact of Insecurity on Stability in Education

(a) Social Impact: According to sociologists, education is a social process that unites the social self and organizes the individual self through the acquisition and internalization of moral principles, social competencies, physical abilities, and (special) mental qualities that are determined and required by society through interactions with other individuals and elements of life and society. This process is

largely for the educated to be functional and actively participate in society, and fundamentally for the realization of a cohesive, stable, and progressive society. As a result, socialization is how many sociologists describe it. To put it simply, the level of interaction that characterizes a community determines the level of education inside it. The ability to learn, develop, or transfer (new) knowledge is correspondingly reduced in environments where people feel unsafe because the traumatic anxieties that permeate the atmosphere undermine relationships between students and teachers.

(b) Impact of the environment: Education can only take place in situations that are comparable to, yet distinct from those that promote learning, with a variety of qualities including people, culture, space, and infrastructure. A healthy atmosphere is preferable for sustainable education. Nothing works well in an insecure environment, especially when it comes to learning. An insecure learning environment can exacerbate other issues like the

destruction of existing facilities, scare off qualified teachers, trainers, and learners, and result in a shortage of creative materials, in addition to endangering effective learning through the behavior and interactions of both teachers and students.

(c) Psychological impact: According to Zahra (2019), a student's psychological stability has a significant impact on their academic performance. Three categories have been proposed by psychologists to represent the elements that influence learning: learner-resident factors, teacher-resident factors, and environment-resident factors. Nonetheless, tension and insecurity frequently resulted in emotional, psychological, and mental imbalances. Abraham Maslow's hypothesis states that psychological needs, such as the need for serenity and a safe and secure existence, are the second most fundamental category of needs after a person's needs for survival have been met. For instance, when anxiety, dread of approaching disaster, or a threat to one's life predominates, one is not going to consider how to

effectively influence, learn, or accomplish anything. This suggests that learning occurs more successfully when both the teacher and the students are in a pleasant emotional state that can pique students' curiosity and focus the attention required for learning (or teaching).

(d) Financial impact: The majority of the time, major or ongoing violence and insecurity have an impact on people's livelihoods. This is shown in nations like Nigeria, Kenya, and others where social vices like banditry, kidnapping, livestock rustling, and conflicts between farmers and herders have severely damaged areas, exploited financial resources, and restricted economic activity. Many have been driven to relocate out of places where they can make ends meet and into places where they feel safe first due to political violence and tension generated by politics, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Myanmar. Because of this, the majority of people's financial stability has been undermined, impoverishing those who ought to foot the bill

for education and making it look like a luxury that is out of reach for some.

Conclusion & Recommendations

The case has been made for the link between insecurity and instability in the education sector in Nigeria. The objective, distinguished guests is to find a sustainable solution to this problem. I propose that we begin by tackling the problem of ungoverned spaces in our country. There are vast territories all across the country where the impact of government and governance is not felt. These people live on a subsistent basis and are completely disconnected from socioeconomic development. These spaces breed criminality and provide safe haven for criminals in Nigeria. It may explain how terrorists and bandits can kidnap hundreds of students at a time and conveniently keep them despite the tools and technology available to security agents. Reducing ungoverned spaces will be key to intelligence gathering, rapid response

efforts, and community inclusion in the fight against insecurity in Nigeria.

In many areas, there is government presence especially during election campaigns but they are seriously under policed hence have little to no security. The national problem of inadequate security personnel across all agencies and poor funding for them has led to the discussions around state police at the National Executive Council. Many states including Katsina have established some form of local structure to fight insecurity. This has yielded positive results but is very capital intensive and drains resources from socioeconomic development. Improving the capacity of the local security structures can greatly improve security in schools and prevent attacks on the education system. The local security must have full vertical integration with federal security agencies and horizontal integration with other states to achieve its full potential. The Katsina state government has explored early warning systems to help schools and communities prevent criminal attacks. Securing lives and

livelihoods is the long-term sustainable solution to our problems.

Socioeconomic development leads to greater participation in the education sector while also improving the quality of education provided. We must invest in our people and communities in a manner that aligns with their developmental needs and priorities. This also means investing in education and skills acquisition on a strategic basis. Marginalized and underserved communities must be identified and accorded the economic justice they deserve. This will prevent the recruitment of young men and women to support bandits and all types of criminals.

The challenges are enormous and will take time to fix but government must be the enabler of sustainable change towards improving security and reducing the instability caused in the education sector. No nation has prospered without an educated population.