

## Impact of School Environmental Insecurity on Science Education at the Secondary School Level

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### **Abstract**

*The study was an analytical descriptive survey which investigated the impact of school environmental insecurity on science education at the secondary school level. It was carried out in three Local Government Areas of Rivers State – Oyigbo, Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt City Local Government Areas. It was guided by three research questions and three hypotheses. The sample of the study consisted of 116 science teachers, and 82 school heads (principals/vice principals) randomly picked from selected public and private secondary schools within the LGAs, making a total of 198 respondents. The instrument for data collection was the researchers'-made questionnaire known as Environmental Insecurity and Science Education Questionnaire (EISEQ). The reliability was determined to be 0.70 by Cronbach alpha, which was appropriate for the study. The data collected were analyzed by using means and standard deviation for answering the research questions while the hypotheses were tested with z-test at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the study indicated that the factors that lead to school environmental insecurity include: poor school-community relationship, poor security awareness, poor relationship with security agencies, lack of security personnel, unavailability/inadequacy of security gadgets (like: CCTVs, parameter fences, alarms and cameras), ethnic/political/religious crises, students indiscipline (gangsterism, drug abuse, and cultism). Moreover, it showed that school environmental insecurity adversely affected the effective teaching and learning of science in secondary schools. This is evident with the fact that; parents were afraid of releasing their children to school, students were afraid to attend school, teachers could not cover the content of science curricula and schools were indefinitely closed down. The strategies for dealing with/or coping with insecurity for promoting the teaching and learning of science include: deployment of security*

*personnel to schools, installing security gadgets (parameter fence with naked electric wires, CCTVs, alarms and cameras), training of staff on security-related issues, promoting school community relationship, use of virtual strategies and online learning platforms, and using dialogue in resolving ethnic, religious and political crises. Based on these, recommendations were made among which were that; government, private sector and NGOs should equip schools with security gadgets/facilities, give teachers, principals/vice principals and non-academic staff security awareness training, promote good relationship between school, community and security agencies etc.*

**Keywords:** Environmental insecurity, Science education, Secondary school.

Science and technology play vital role in development of nations. They constitute the force that engineers the advancement of nations by liberating them from poverty and obscurity in order to make them self-sufficient. In agreement with the foregoing, Guyana Chronicles (2009) stated that the application of science and technology has brought very astounding changes in all facets of the world's economy and fields of human endeavor.

Moreover, the level of advancement in science and technology is the basis for classifying nations of the world into developed, developing and underdeveloped nations as well as first world, second world or third world countries. The developed nations have strong influence and control over the underdeveloped countries as a result of their economic superiority (NTI, 2000).

However, science education plays a significant role in helping to develop nations by giving the citizens privileges and opportunities so that there is improvement in economy of nations, and as well ensures that knowledge is enhanced and innovation is promoted in the contemporary economy of today's society (Nwogu & Ikiroma 2019). In line with this, Nwanekezi and Arokoyu (2016) argued that science education is concerned with the production of scientifically literate society and the development of potential scientific and technological manpower. This underscores the need for effective teaching and learning of science at the secondary school level of education.

The goals of secondary education in Nigeria according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN (2004) are (i) to prepare the individual for useful living within the society and (ii) for higher education. A critical look at these goals indicate the need for science education at this level of education. Hence there is need to inculcate scientific skills and attitudes in youngsters to enable them have the capacity to contribute to the development of their immediate society, and as well prepare them to take up career in science and technology, since science and technology has been identified in contemporary times as gateway to national development.

Additionally, the goals of science education in Nigeria shows that science education is the instrumentality that will bring about the required manpower and technocrats with the requisite knowledge and skills that will bring about sustainable development and advancement of the economy. To this end, FRN (2004) noted in her National Policy on Education that the goals of science education in Nigeria shall be:

(a) To inculcate inquiring, knowing and rational/critical mind in order to bring about meaningful living within the society and for democracy.

- (b) to produce scientists that will give rise to national development
- (c) to support and take care of studies in technology and encourage advancement in technology
- (d) help people understand complex natural issues or phenomena that take place in the physical world, the forms and the conduct of life.

Nonetheless, the teaching and learning of science at the secondary school level has not been very encouraging based on certain factors, which affect teacher effectiveness, students' interest in science and their academic achievement. To this end Nwogu, Neighbour and Aziaka (2019) mentioned the following as the factors affecting the teaching and learning of science, viz: (i) quality teaching, (ii) quality of teachers, (iii) academic qualification (iv) professional qualification (v) teaching experience (vi) teacher remuneration (vii) in-service training (viii) quality of teaching and learning resources. Also, they went further to hint that the major problem often cited by science educators as a challenge to science teaching and learning is lack of science equipments, laboratories and materials for effective learning of science.

In these recent times, it is very unfortunate that insecurity in the nation has become a serious challenge to education, especially the teaching and learning of science in Nigeria. Hence, the need for this study on the impact of school environmental insecurity on science education at the secondary school level.

With regard to the challenge of insecurity in the nation, it has become very imperative to consider the safety of learners, teachers, non-academic staff and facilities of paramount importance to the nation, if the goals of education stipulated in the National Policy on Education are to be actualized. Moreover, the issue of teachers and learners' safety is becoming a problem on daily basis and is making headlines on national newspapers and magazines.

Insecurity has been variously defined by various scholars based on their perceptions. Obiechina, Abraham and Nwogu (2018) defined insecurity by looking at it from two points of view. First, it is perceived as the state of being vulnerable to dangerous threats and attacks which can harm someone. Secondly they saw it as a state of being exposed to risks and apprehension. They went further to posit that insecurity is the absence of peace, safety and security for teachers to carry out their instructional roles without fear of being attacked. Nwakpa (2015) said that insecurity is a degenerated stage of conflict, breach to human security, extreme violence characterized with fighting, death, as well as injury which ensues.

Ojukwu and Nwanma (2015) noted that Ontario Ministry of Education in Canada listed the following as the features that are peculiar to a safe school environment: (i) a caring and place that encourages co-operation, where there is positive and mutual relationships between students and staff, (ii) where democratic values are given primacy, the rights and responsibilities are acknowledge, (iii) there is respect for cultural diversity (iv) respect for law and orders, as well as the individual.

The scholars went further to posit that on the contrariwise, a school environment characterized by insecurity is linked to the following: its classrooms, hostels, laboratories and refectories are always in a dilapidated state, the teachers have a negative attitude to allow the emotional needs of students, and there is undue influences, and clashes, of local community interfering with school activities.

Saleh (2011) reported that constant attacks made it very difficult for teachers and other stakeholders to encourage parents to allow their children to attend school in the face of insecurity experienced in the country. To this end, Obiechina et al (2018) asserted that there is rise in social ills and vices such as insurgency, terrorism, kidnapping, robbery, cultism, ritual killings, unguided militancy, high rate of violence and loss of values for life which have found their way to secondary schools, have become a serious threat to the safety of teachers and students, and came up with the submission that nobody is safe in the country.

There have been some cases of insecurity attacks on school environment. Lawal (2018) pointed out the case of Abduction of 300 schools girls from Chibok Government Secondary School, in Chibok, Bornu State, as well as the recent abduction of 110 Dapchi female pupils in the Northern part of the country. She also went further to note that twelve school girls were abducted from Babington Macauley Junior Seminary, a school within the outskirts of Lagos, and this throw the institution into a state of confusion and apprehension. In addition, Nwosu and Ikwunna (2019) opined that there have been cases of insecurity in form of kidnapping of teachers and students in Lagos, cases of killing of students and their teachers, detonation of bombs in school assemblies which killed a large number of people in Yobe State. They went further to indicate that five secondary school teachers were kidnapped at gun point in Rivers State which increased the level of fright among people living in the area. According to them most at times some of the insecurity attacks involves raping of students in the dormitory; and many of the school attacks were not reported.

It is obvious with the foregoing, that school environmental insecurity affects the teaching and learning process. To this end it is drastically affected. This implies that security of school will lead to the attainment of national educational goals, as well as the goals for science education in Nigeria which are a derivative of the national educational goals.

Okafor (2014) posited that as a result of insecurity, parents do not want to release their children to school again. More so, most of them have deserted their places of abode to go to peaceful parts of the country. This on the long run is affecting the goals of education in the country because children are not given the opportunity to learn in order to acquire knowledge and develop skills; that will enable them live and contribute to sustainable development in the nation. Consequently, science education which enables youngsters to acquire these knowledge and skills is hampered.

Many studies have revealed that school environmental insecurity impacts negatively on education. Ojukwu and Nwanma (2015) carried out a study on the influence of insecurity of school environment on the behavior of secondary school students in Isiala-Ngwa North and South Local Government Areas of Abia State, Nigeria. The sample of study consisted of 200 students from the LGAs. It was guided by three hypothesis and the instrument for data collection was a questionnaire. Independent sample t-test was used for analyzing data and the results indicated that the two LGAs differ significantly with regard to insecurity of their schools, with the northern school having a high rate of insecurity, and that the students did not differ in their behavior due to insecurity.

In the same vein, the study by Obiechina, Abraham and Nwogu (2018) on perceived impact of insecurity arising from physical attacks on Teachers productivity in

public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria, which involved 611 teachers revealed that the physical attacks on teachers demoralizes them and negatively affect their commitment to work, and reduces their productivity to a very high extent.

Additionally, Ojukwu (2017) investigated the effect of insecurity of school environment on the academic performance of students in Imo State. The sample of study was made up of 1000 teachers, 500 males and 500 females. The instrument for collection of data was a questionnaire; means and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the hypotheses were tested with t-test. The findings of the study revealed that insecurity of school environment had a significant effect on the academic performance of students. Also, students' gangsterism, smoking of indian hemp, use of hard drugs, cult and other related violent activities were some of the factors that constituted insecurity of the school environment and which led to high dropout rate in secondary schools.

The empirical studies cited in this discourse revealed that school environmental insecurity is posing a serious challenge to the education system especially at the secondary school level. These lay credence to the need for the present study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In these contemporary times there have been several cases of insecurity attacks on schools, as a result of insurgency, religious fanaticism, bigotry as well as ethnic clashes. This had made people to desert their homes and means of livelihood to find solace in other peaceful parts of the country, leading to increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs), especially in the North – East region of the country; where people are slaughtered in numbers, women and young girls are raped, forced into a marriage relationship they are not interested in, while young persons are indoctrinated and used in suicide bombing missions by the Boko Haram Islamic sect. This has denied young persons of school going age in this region opportunity to learn science for acquiring knowledge and developing the useful skills that will make them useful in the society.

Unfortunately, the Southern parts of the country which has been quite peaceful all this while is presently facing serious security challenge as a result of the agitations for secession from the sovereign state of Nigeria. This is actually having a drastic effect on the education system because in most communities within the Southern-region, especially in the South-Eastern region people have withdrawn their children from school and have fled their homes because of the security-situation of region. In line with this, the researchers have decided to investigate the Impact of School Environmental Insecurity on Science Education at the Secondary School Level.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

In general terms, the main thrust of this study is to investigate the impact of school environmental insecurity on science education at the secondary school level. Specifically, the study will:

1. Determine the factors that lead to school environmental insecurity.
2. Ascertain the perceived impact of school environmental insecurity on science education at the secondary school level.

3. The strategies for dealing with or coping with insecurity for promoting science education at the secondary level.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the factors that lead to school environmental insecurity?
2. What is the perceived impact of school environmental insecurity on science education at the secondary school level?
3. What are the strategies for dealing/or coping with insecurity for promoting science education at the secondary school level?

### **Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of science teachers and school heads on the factors that lead to school environmental insecurity.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of science teachers and school heads on the impact of school environmental insecurity on science education at the secondary school level.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of science teachers and school heads on the strategies of dealing/or coping with insecurity for promoting science education at the secondary school level.

### **Methodology**

The researcher adopted analytical descriptive survey for this study. The population for the study consisted of all science teachers, principals and vice principals in Oyigbo, Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt City Local Government Areas of Rivers State.

The sample of study were randomly drawn from nine public secondary schools from each LGA, making a total of twenty-seven (27) public schools as well as four private school from each LGA, making a total of twelve (12) private schools. One hundred and sixteen (116) science teachers, thirty (30) principals and fifty-two (52) vice-principals randomly constituted the sample of the study; which makes a total of one hundred and ninety-eight respondents.

The instrument for data collection was the researchers'-made questionnaire known as Environmental Insecurity and Science Education Questionnaire (EISEQ). It is a four-point likert type of questionnaire which is rated thus; Strongly Agree (SA) - 4, Agree (A) - 3, Disagree (D) -2, Strongly Disagree (SD) - 1. To this end a criterion reference mean of 2.5 and above were acceptable for the study. Moreover, it consists of three clusters: cluster A dealt with the factor that lead to school environmental insecurity, while cluster B dealt with perceived Impact of School Environmental Insecurity on Science Education, and section C dealt with strategies for dealing with/or coping with insecurity for promoting science education at the secondary level. EISEQ was validated by two experts in science education and two specialists in measurement and evaluation. Cronbach Alpha was used to establish the reliability coefficient of EISEQ as 0.70 which means that the instruments is 70% reliable and 30% unreliable for the study. Copies of EISEQ was distributed to the respondents by the researchers; and also retrieved on the spot. Data collected was analysed by using means and standard deviations for answering the research questions and Z test for the testing of hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

**Results**

**Research Question 1:**

What are the factors that lead to school environmental insecurity?

**Table 1: Mean Ratings of Respondents on Factors that lead to School Environmental Insecurity**

S/No	Item	Science Teacher		Principals/Vice Principals	
		Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	s.d	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	s.d
1	Poor school-community relationship	3.12	0.88	3.00	0.70
2	Dilapidated structures and facilities	2.89	1.08	2.75	0.80
3	Lack of security awareness	2.87	0.50	3.00	0.78
4	Poor relationship with security agencies	3.00	0.49	2.98	0.70
5	Lack of security gadgets like CCTVs, parameter fences, alarms, cameras etc	3.30	0.91	3.08	0.79
6	Inadequacy of security personnels (day guards, night guards and gate keepers, army and police)	3.08	0.79	2.80	1.02
7	Communal/Ethnic clashes	3.08	0.52	3.10	0.87
8	Religious crises/fanatism	3.19	0.82	3.00	0.50
9	Political issues/crises	2.78	0.97	3.19	0.83
10	Students' indiscipline (drugs abuse, cultism, and gansterism)	2.86	1.03	2.75	0.80

Table 1 revealed that all the items on the table are the factors that lead to school environmental insecurity. This is because all the mean ratings of the respondents were above the criterion reference mean of 2.50.

**Research Question 2:**

What is the perceived impact of school environmental insecurity on science education at the secondary school level?

**Table 2: Mean Ratings of Responses on perceived Impact of School Environmental Insecurity on Science Education**

S/No	Item	Science Teacher		Principals/Vice Principals	
		Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	s.d	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	s.d
1	Leads to closing down of schools and hinders the learning of science	3.19	0.82	3.00	0.50
2	Students are afraid to attend school and this affects their learning of science to acquire knowledge and skills	2.85	1.30	2.83	1.29
3	Affects the extent to which content of science curriculum is covered	3.02	0.98	3.20	1.02

4	Parents refuse to release their children, which affects the teaching/learning of science	3.30	1.08	3.00	1.03
5	Affects the extent to which students acquire the process skills of skills	2.88	0.96	2.81	0.91
6	Leads to destruction of facilities and equipment for teaching and learning	2.72	1.39	2.80	0.92
7	Affects the extent to which students develop scientific attitude	2.80	0.96	2.72	0.72

With regard to table two, it is obvious that the mean ratings of the science teachers and principals/vice principals scored above the criterion reference mean of 2.50. these indicated that school environmental insecurity affected teaching and learning of science at the secondary school level.

**Research Question 3:**

What are the strategies for dealing/or coping with insecurity for promoting science education at the secondary school level?

**Table 3: Strategies for Dealing/or Coping with Insecurity to Promote Science Education**

S/No	Item	Science Teacher		Principals/Vice Principals	
		Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	s.d	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	s.d
1	Parameter fencing and use of naked wire	2.83	0.96	2.79	0.90
2	Rehabilitating school structures and facilities	2.78	1.08	2.80	0.92
3	Deployment of security personnels to schools	2.80	0.92	2.72	1.39
4	Installing security gadgets: CCTVs, Alarms and Cameras	3.25	1.07	3.00	1.03
5	Training of teachers principals and non-academic staff on security issues	3.19	0.82	3.00	0.50
6	Promoting school community relationship	2.78	1.08	2.75	0.80
7	Use of on-line and virtual learning strategies	2.78	1.08	2.75	0.80
8	Using dialogue for resolution of ethnic and political crises	2.85	1.30	2.80	1.02

The data from the above table are above the criterion mean of 2.50. this is an indication that they are the strategies for dealing with/or coping with insecurity for promoting science education at the secondary school level.

**Hypothesis 1; HO<sub>1</sub>:**

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of science teachers and school heads on the factors that lead to school Environmental Insecurity.

**Table 4: Z-test Analysis on Factors that lead to School Environmental Insecurity**

Group	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	s.d	N	Df	Zcal	Zcrit	Decision
Science teachers	3.41	0.94	116	196	0.39	1.96	Accepted
Principals/vice principals	3.36	0.87	82				

From the table it is obvious that the calculated z-value (0.39) is less than the critical value of Z from tables ( $z_{crit} = 1.96$ ) at 0.05 level of significance and 196 degrees of freedom. Hence, we fail to reject the null hypothesis of no significant difference. This indicates that the factors are responsible for schools environmental insecurity.

### **Hypothesis 2; HO<sub>2</sub>:**

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of science teachers and school heads on the impact of school environmental insecurity on science education at the secondary school level.

**Table 5: Z-test Analysis on the Impact of School Environmental Insecurity on Science Education**

Group	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	s.d	N	Df	Zcal	Zcrit	Decision
Science teachers	2.96	1.07	116	196	0.36	1.96	Accepted
Principals/vice principals	2.91	0.91	82				

With regard to table 5 the calculated Z-value ( $z_{cal} = 0.36$ ) is less than the critical value of Z from table ( $z_{crit} = 1.96$ ). Based on this, we fail to reject the null hypothesis of no significant difference. This means that the science teachers and school heads (principal/vice principals) agreed that school environmental insecurity had a drastic effect on science education at the secondary level of education.

### **Hypothesis 3; HO<sub>3</sub>:**

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of science teachers and school heads on the strategies of dealing/or coping with insecurity for promoting science education at the secondary school level

**Table 6: Z-test Analysis on the Strategies for Dealing/or Coping with Insecurity to Promote Science Education**

Group	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	s.d	N	Df	Zcal	Zcrit	Decision
Science teachers	2.96	1.02	116	196	0.50	1.96	Accepted
Principals/vice principals	2.89	0.95	82				

Table 6 revealed that the  $z_{cal}$  (0.50) is less than  $z_{crit}$  (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance i.e  $z_{cal} < z_{crit}$ . Based on this, we fail to reject the null hypothesis of no significant difference. This implies that the hypothesis is accepted; hence the items are the strategies for dealing/or coping with insecurity to promote science education.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings in table 1 revealed that the factors responsible for school environmental insecurity include:

1. poor school-community relationship
2. dilapidated structures and facilities
3. lack of security awareness
4. poor relationship with security agencies
5. lack of/inadequate security gadgets e.g parameter fence, CCTVs, cameras etc
6. inadequacy of security personnels
7. communal/ethnic clashes
8. religious crises/fanatism
9. political issues/crisis

Moreover, z-test of hypothesis one showed no significant difference in the mean ratings of science teachers and school heads. The findings in a way supported the work of Ojukwu (2017) who found out that violent activities in schools is responsible for school environmental insecurity.

With regard to research question two, it is obvious that the findings from table two revealed that school environmental insecurity adversely affected the teaching and learning of science at secondary school level. This is evident in the fact that it led to closure of school which hampered the teaching and learning of science in schools, made students afraid to attend school, parents to withdraw their children/wards from school, and science teachers unable to cover their curriculum etc. More so, the z-test of null hypothesis two showed no significant difference in the mean ratings of science teachers and school heads. These findings supports Sale (2011) and Ojukwu (2017) who reported that insecurity made stake holders not to be able to encourage parents to send their children to school in the face of insecurity and also that insecurity affected teaching and learning which led to poor academic performance of students.

Results from table 3 showed that the strategies for dealing/or coping with insecurity to promote science education at the secondary school level are: (i) parameter fencing and use of naked wires (ii) deployment of security personnels to schools (iii) installation of security gadgets/equipment (CCTVs, cameras, alarms, etc) (iv) training of teachers, principals and non-academic staff on security-related issues (v) use of online platforms and virtual learning strategies and (vi) using dialogue for resolution of ethnic, religious and political crises. However, the z-test of hypothesis three, showed no significant different in the mean ratings of science teachers and school heads on the strategies for dealing/or coping with insecurity to promote science education.

### **Conclusion**

In these contemporary times, school environmental insecurity appears to be posing a serious challenge to the education sector. This study revealed that school environmental insecurity has a drastic effect on the effective teaching and learning of science for acquisition of knowledge and development of skills; as well as attitude to live and contribute to the development of the society. To this end, there is need to adopt effective strategies for dealing with insecurity in order to promote science education at the secondary school level.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations were made:

1. Government, private sector and NGOs should pool resources together and equip schools with security gadgets (like CCTVs, Cameras, alarms etc).
2. Teachers, principals/vice principals, and non-academic staff should be given security awareness training from time to time.
3. There should be cordial relationship between the schools and host communities, and security agencies.
4. Security personnel should be deployed to schools.
5. Science teachers and school heads (principals/vice principals) should be given ICT training in order for them to be conversant with online and virtual strategies for teaching/learning of science
6. School should be fenced properly fenced with naked electric wires in sensitive areas.

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