

EDUCATION AND SECURITY IN NIGERIA: THE OPTION OF SECURITIZATION THEORY

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Abstract

Insecurity in schools is an international problem that is affecting all parts of the globe and Nigeria in particular. In recent times, Nigeria school system has come under violent attacks that range from kidnapping of both the staff and students to outright bombing and killing which usually claim lives and property. The situation has assumed a dangerous scenario with the emergence of Boko Haram terrorist sect. The effects of these attacks have further culminated in the fragile school system which is inimical to sustainable and national development. Several measures have been adopted to tackle this menace but there are still pockets of attack being experienced in the school environment. If these attacks are not proactively tackled, it will portend a long term danger to quality education. Therefore, this paper examined the issues of school threats and posits that the frequent attacks on the school system should be securitized and placed on red-alert for the state actors to devote adequate attention and resources toward curtailing this menace. The paper further recommends that government should implement policies that will improve security, education expenditures and national income in order to improve school enrolment.

Keywords: Insecurity, securitization, theory, education, school

Educational institutions all over the world are expected to be centres of learning and propagation of good conduct. School environments are designed to be places that are safe, secured and peaceful. In fact, when a child goes to school, one of the most critical thing that parents are concerned about is the safety and security of the child in the school or while on transit (James, 2019). Keeping school secure and safe is a very important task that should be done with all degree of seriousness.

Terrorists attacks on schools are no longer a far-fetched notion that can be ignored. The rise of Boko-Haram sect created a new dimension to Nigeria's insecurity challenges. The belief of this deadly body is that western education is evil and should be abolished. The activities of this sect against education came to the fore following the abduction of 275 students of Government Girls College, Chibok. This internationally well published case of school kidnapping brought new dimension to Nigeria's security challenge as many secondary school attacks have been recorded thereafter (Nwosu-Izuwah, 1999). There were cases of killing of students and their teachers. Bombs have been severally detonated in school assemblies, leaving many students dead while school buildings are burnt down which disrupted teaching and learning. Also, five secondary school teachers were abducted at gun-point from a school in Rivers State which left the people in the area in total fear and tension (Iheanachor, 2015). Many of these incidents were

never reported by the national media which affected the true situation. These attacks have negative effect on teaching and learning.

Going by any security standards, public and private schools at all levels in Nigeria have low degree of security. Indeed, one of the critical elements embedded in the foundation of a conducive school environment for teaching and learning is the provision of safety and security (Manga, 2019). This centers on the fact that attendance and academic performance are closely linked with the extent to which students perceive their school environment to be secured (Dungu, 2019). In the same vein, Akintude & Musa, (2016) opined that Insecure school environment affect the learning of children. Situations of insecurity triggers traumatic disorders and toxic stress that affect learning negatively. General school attendance and enrolment are equally affected as parents pull their children out of school while in some extreme cases. Insecurity led to closure of schools. For instance, Borno State schools were shot-down in major towns as a result of insurgency (Ameh, 2015). These attacks on schools usually lead to vandalization and outright destruction of school facilities which discourage the establishment of new schools. In the end, educational attainment in terms of quality of graduates and manpower suffers which truncates overall national development aspirations.

In a bid to tackle these problem, the Federal Government has for some years now been allocating huge portion of the national budget to security and in 2011 the Anti-Terrorism Act was equally enacted by the National Assembly (Ewetan, 2013). The act seeks to provide for measures for the protection, prohibition and combating of acts of terrorism, the financing of terrorism in Nigeria and prescribed penalties for violating any of its provisions (Orikpe, 2013). Again, the Federal Government has embarked on fundamental surveillance, investigation of criminal related offences, heightening of physical security or disrupting potential attacks, strengthening of security agencies through the provision of security facilities and the development and broadcast of security tips in mass media (King, 2016).

In spite of these steps, Nigeria cannot be ranked among the secured places for educational activities. Given the importance of education, there is the need to deploy extraordinary approach to tackle the space of attacks on school facilities in Nigeria. Securitization remains the only option to tackle the deplorable security situation of the country. Securitization is a process by which some actors can transform subjects into matters of security concern that warrants taking extraordinary measures. It requires the state actors to transform non-security issues into security threats. A good example is United States and Europe's successful Securitization of immigration due to concern of terrorist infiltration. Thus, external measures have subsequently been applied through tight border control (Naujoks, 2015).

This paper posits that in addition to political leadership failure and other systematic institutional uncertainties/Irregularities in Nigeria, it is lack of proactive security planning that have given rise to the recurrent and multiplicity of school related insecurity challenges. As no nation can rise above its level of educational development, there is the need to adequately source the vulnerable school environment. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to examine the sustainability of government interventions and the application of Securitization theory in the quest to achieve a secure school environment.

Issues of Insecurity in the School System

Insecurity in school has been attributed to nonchalant attitude of school administrators towards issues of security. Many school administrators do not effectively recognize, direct, coordinate, supervise and monitor security activities in their schools (Jill, 2000). For instance, they do not evaluate security loopholes and provide appropriate solution and the required staffing to man security posts. Gross incompetence of school security personnel tends to contribute a lot to insecurity in schools. In fact, Garry (2000) posited that in spite of the over increasing spate of school shootings around the world, many schools neither have full time security guards as their employees nor do they hire them for the school. Where security guards exist, they are usually retired, old and physically weak men who lack the strength, agility and good eyesight to perform security jobs efficiently.

Again, the security guards in Nigeria are generally unarmed, unequipped, untrained, corrupt and lazy to cope with internal security challenge and are not fully prepared to defend schools from external attacks by terrorists and other criminals. Also, Kaneth (2003), opined that many security guards in schools do not engage in primary security duties of patrolling the school environment, guarding of buildings, facilities and infrastructures, intelligence gathering and scouting. In some cases, school security officers do not investigate urgent security reports to apprehend, detain and hand over people caught in criminal acts in the school to the police for prosecution. This is equally worsened by lack of regular security inspection of schools by the ministry of education.

Students are at the centre of the education system but they also have a share in the insecurity issues of the school. According to Sheila (1998), the overcrowding in students hostels, classrooms, laboratories and vital places in schools could generate conflict in the use of limited -resources which could disrupt peace and Orderliness. Sometimes when a student misconduct is not appropriately punished, it tends to embolden students to commit more crimes which may in turn escalate to cause insecurity in schools. Also, some students do not report suspicious characters, objects or movements and this may threaten the security of the schools (Egene, 2001).

Deficiencies in the construction of schools plant may contribute to security problems. The National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC, 2001) adduced that schools that are not fenced provide easy access to criminals and terrorists while school buildings that are not constructed in line with standard specifications may soon collapse causing loss of lives to property. Forms of insecurity in schools is physical violence in the form of assault, battery, robbery, abduction, false imprisonment, manslaughter and outright murder (Arisi, 2005). Also, according to Thomas (1999) violent student behaviour, drug abuse, alcoholism, smoking of dangerous substances are various forms of insecurity that generate misconduct and criminal activities.

Concepts of Security and Insecurity

Security is seen as a basic human need that contributes to learning (Akintunde & Musa, 2016). It is essential to human existence. According to Abraham Maslow theory of needs, the lower needs of man like jobs, shelter and security must be satisfied before other higher level needs like education and so on (Akintunde, 2015). The inability to meet up with lower needs could result to stress (insecurity) and hinder man from pursuing other higher needs. In fact, security implies the existence of environmental

factors that instill peace of mind and build hope in the individual in order to empower him/her to function effectively in the society. It is a state of safety from danger and protection from physical harm. For instances, poor infrastructural designs in schools can make students vulnerable to insecurity problems like health hazards and stress, A safe school is one that fosters peaceful or cordial relationships among students, teachers and administrators.

On the other hand, insecurity centers on the feeling of uncertainty, dangers or threat to life. Insecurity is a threat to learning. When an individual does not have control over a situation but has to rely on the co-operation of others that cannot be guaranteed, the result may be frustrating and it can affect learning. Prevailing conflict situations within communities around the schools or within the schools often have effect on the teaching and learning activities of such schools.

Perspectives of Insecurity in Schools

According to Katsina (2012), insecurity in Nigeria is a concomitant of the deep and structurally entrenched crisis of development that creates condition for inequality, poverty and unemployment. This line of reasoning was echoed for sometimes during the tenure of Dr. Goodluck Jonathan as Nigerian President, as Boko-Haram group kept on creating tension and insecurity across schools in Nigeria.

Since the inception of the decades, a lot of school attacks have occurred in Nigeria. Most of the reported cases took place in the northern part of Nigeria where the Boko-Haram activities are more prevalent. Therefore in this section, Attempt is made to examine major case of school attacks and insecurity in Nigeria. This may not be elaborate and comprehensive as these evidence were pieced together from different sources.

There was mass shooting at the Mamudo Government Secondary School Yobe State on 6th July, 2013, and it was reported that about 41 students and a teacher were killed while Boko-Haram claimed responsibility of the attack. Another attack occurred on the 29th of September, 2013 at Gujba College in Yobe State and about 44 people were killed. About five months later, precisely on the 25th of February 2014, Federal Government College Buni-Yadi was attacked leaving about 59 boys dead and the entire halls burnt down. By the 14th of April, the Boko-Haram Sect attacked Government Girls College in Chibok Local Government Area of Borno State and kidnapped 276 girls. Some of these girls have been rescued while many are still in captivity where no one can give account of them.

Also, on the 2nd of March 2016, 3 students of a private secondary school, Babangida Junior Seminary, Ikorodu were abducted by unknown gun men (Punch Newspaper, June 2016). On the 13th January 2017, ten students and staff of Nigerian Tulip International College in Isheri, Ogun State were abducted-On the 17th of February 2018, in what seems like a repeat of the Chibok Girls attack, about 111 school girls from the Government Girls Science and Technical College, Dapchi, Yobe State were abducted. Even though, most of these girls have been released, this particular case showed failure of the existing security network to secure the already volatile area as Dapichi is close to Chibok. All these attacks indicate vulnerability of schools which may degenerate into bigger security and education challenges if not checked.

The Theory of Securitization

The theory was propounded by the societal security theorists Waever, Buzan and Wilde from Copenhagen school in 1998 but became popular among the constructive studies (Theiler, 2010). The term securitization is the process by which state actors transform subjects into matters of security concern that enables extraordinary measures to be taken in matter of security. It is a process by which ostensible non-security issues are transformed into urgent security concern which are therefore portrayed as existential threats to a referent object by a securitizing actor who thereby generates endorsement of emergency measures beyond rules that would otherwise bind.

The framework for securitization allows for a threat to be probable, protracted and endangers the existence of a nation. According to the securitization theorists, when a subject is successfully securitized a higher degree of attention and resources are devoted to it despite the existence of other subjects. The success of securitization process depends on who securitizes (Securitizing actor), what issues are securitized (threats), for whom (referent object), the audience (people), the reason for securitization, the condition of securitization and the result of the securitization acts (Suzan, Waever & Wilde, 1998). The actor is the person who initiates the move to securitize an issue. The move follows the establishment of an existential threat. This threat is an object or an ideal that has been identified as being potential harmful if left unchecked. A referent object or ideal is that which is being threatened and therefore needs to be protected. The audience are the target of the securitization act that needs to be persuaded to accept the issue as a security threat. For securitization act to be successful, it must be accepted by the audience. If a subject is successfully securitized, then, it is possible to legitimize extraordinary means to solve a perceived problem. This could include declaring a state of emergency (Naujoks, 2015).

Securitization and Nigerian School System

Education is a veritable tool to national development and an investment in education is an important key that unlocks the achievement of a stable society. In fact, without education Nigerians aspiration to be among the leading economies of the world will be a mirage. Given the importance of education and the need for adequate security of the school environment, it is necessary to employ the securitization theory in discussing school security in Nigeria. As earlier noted, school insecurity is an essential threat to our national development which requires the adoption of extraordinary measure to access the situation. Securitization of school attacks require that stakeholders in the education sector, parents, non-governmental organizations and the entire society understand the enormity of the danger posed by this phenomenon and the long term implications if not checked. According to the securitization theory, the referent actor in this paper are the students, pupils, teachers, school administrators and the future generations who are vulnerable to school attacks. The long term effect of unchecked school insecurity might be the total collapse of the educational system. The securitization actors include the stakeholders positions, the media and the parents who should raise alarm about the looming danger of school insecurity. This is necessary in order to draw the attention of the government, security agencies and educational policy makers on the need to adopt extraordinary measures to tackle the threat of school insecurity (Gerard, 2014).

The extraordinary measure might be multi-dimensional and involves the deployment of special military personnel to schools, the establishment of special security post in every school, the allocation of adequate funds to education sector to help in the acquisition of cutting-edge security gadgets to forestall attacks, the deployment of the state of the art information and communication systems as well as other modern technologies for easy detection and prevention of impending attacks. Also, there should be compulsory subject on school security and safety in the primary and secondary schools, to reorientate school children on security issues (Todaro and Smith, 2012).

For the success of the aforementioned strategies, the audience in the securitization process must be involved. In this paper, the audience in this securitization move is the entire society. For instance, in the case of the Boko-Haram, where every citizen (except the insurgents and their sponsors) accepted that their operations pose a threat to our national unity and cohesion, this entire Nigeria citizens should be convinced to except the looming conflagration that trails the issue of school insecurity. Since, the major reason why Boko-Haram carry out their attack on schools is because, according to them, western education is sinful, it is important for their ideology and its effect be seen in this light as the sect itself (Abulof, 2014).

Just as in the case of concerns of human rights abuse and societal problem trailing the reign of terror in Afghanistan and classification of migrants from certain countries of origin into United States as potential terrorism, the state actors and audience successfully securitized every linkage to these issues and applied extraordinary measures to forestall the long term effect. Equally, this paper posits that the same measure should be applied in the case of school insecurity in Nigeria due to the long term effect on the country. This will usher in an advocacy system that will put pressure on the government to adopt extra-ordinary measures (like that of Boko-Haram) towards the prevention of incessant school attacks (Akintunde & Selzing – Musa, 2016).

Conclusions

The first duty of any government or administration in institutions is to protect lives and property proactively. All other activities of governance must be seen as coming after, for economic growth and strides in socio-political development are for the living. No one builds schools, develops transport systems and infrastructural facilities, provides entertainment and health centres and plants food for the dead. It is therefore imperative that government and school administrators must see school children as first priority by way of keeping them alive, safe and comfortable.

The objective of the paper is to ascertain the sustainability of government interventions and the application of the securitization theory in the quest to achieve a secure school environment for sustainable development. The issue of school security should be given a priority attention if Nigeria's quest for national Unity and cohesion would be realized. Relying on the securitization theory, this paper suggested that school insecurity is an essential threat and therefore concluded that it

should be tackled through the deployment of extraordinary measures. Government should put the securitization theory into practice.

Recommendations

This paper focused on the issue of school insecurity and the looming danger it potends if it is not nipped at the bud. The following recommendations are made;

1. The entire school system should be securitized and placed on red-alert for the state actors to devote adequate attention and resources towards ameliorating this menace.
2. There should be application of the theory of securitization to draw national attention to inherent danger of the menace by the relevant stakeholders.
3. Government should put school security at the forefront of security discussions and by proactive longer term planning.
4. Government should implement policies that will improve security, education expenditure and national income in order to improve school enrollment.

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