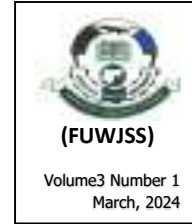# INSECURITY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ATTENDANCE IN ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

There is growing evidence that show that there is decelining school attendance in Ondo State, Nigeria. This paper appraises the impact of insecurity on secondary school students' attendance in Ondo State, Nigeria. Data for the paper emerged through review of related literature, such as journal articles and books. Findings of the study revealed that insecurity significantly influence secondary school students' attendance, school learning programmes and students' class engagement in Ondo State, Nigeria. The study concludes that due to the fear of violence and abduction, secondary school students in Ondo State are increasingly avoiding going to school in areas that are prone to insecurity; thus, this trend has led to a significant reduction in the number of students attending school in the state. The study recommends that the Ondo State Government should provide conducive learning environment in and outside the secondary school for the improvement of students' academic performance.

Keywords: insecurity, secondary school students, school attendance

Introduction

Nigeria as a nation has never experienced bad security challenges as it has in the recent times, while Ondo State in particular, has witnessed a series of unfortunate uncertainties and it seems like it's 'Sunshine' has now gone into oblivion. The issue of insecurity has become a persistently worrying one for Nigerians and global community. While efforts are claimed to be made by various bodies to protect lives and properties of the people, the efforts have not provided a soothing relief. With the lingering security challenges and the inability of the security apparatus of the government to guarantee safety and security in the country, the question that borders everyone in Nigeria today is "can the security challenges be worse than it presently is?"

Even though not many studies have been conducted on the influence of security challenges and secondary school attendance, a large numbers of the available studies have linked the state of the Nigerian security sector to students' unrest. However, the issue now has gone beyond student unrest and added to this, is the issue of kidnapping. In 2022 alone, more than ten schools children cases of kidnapping were recorded in cities in Ondo State, while bandits are preventing many parents from allowing their children going to schools in rural areas of the State. Baderu (2021) argued that the obnoxious situation has grown to the extent that many, especially the government, are befuddled and at loss of insight of what meaningfully could be done to avert the menace of insecurity. One the reason for the establishment of South West Security outfit named Amotekun. Globally, various facets of security issues have been observed to include war and conflict, nuclear weapons, terrorism, cyber threats, drone violence, disease, the environment and climate change. In Nigeria, the range of security threats in addition to the existing ones globally include regional coercion and agitations for cessation, transnational terrorism, Covid-19 pandemic, militant Islamists groups like Boko Haram, organized criminal gangs popularly called bandits, farmer-herder conflict, militants, IPOB, Biafran separatists, piracy, security sector violence against civilians. Various accounts have shown that banditry, militants' operations and Boko Haram have negatively affected security in most part of the country including Ondo State. These negative impacts include killing and kidnapping of farmers, miners, industrial workers and massacre, and chasing of farmers out of their farmlands, seizing of farmlands, cattle rustling, burning and raiding of grain silos, and blocking of local trade routes.

In order to ameliorate the incidence of insecurity, the government at all levels has embarked on criminalization of terrorism by passing the Anti-Terrorism Act in 2011; strengthening of security agencies through the provision of security facilities and the development and broadcast of security tips in mass media as well as establishment of regional security outfits. However, various efforts and the tactics applied so far have not yielded much progress in fighting the security challenges. Yet, Nigeria is at present, witnessing an unprecedented level of insecurity. As a result, Nigeria has consistently ranked low in the Global Peace Index (GPI, 2012), signifying a worsened state of insecurity in the country. Esan (2021) observed that the current security situation in Nigeria has resulted in disruption of academic activities, exodus of people to safer countries, more demand for overseas studies, and to a great extent harm effectiveness and attendance in schools in Nigeria. With the lingering security challenges and the inability of the security apparatus of the government to guarantee safety and security in the country, the security challenges may have influenced

learners' school attendance. Recent statistics have also revealed that school attendance can also influence the academic performance of students to a great extent.

Security Challenges in Nigeria

Nigeria in recent times has witnessed an unprecedented level of insecurity such as Boko Haram activities, banditry, kidnapping, Fulani-Herders-Farmers clashes that resulted in Ondo State issuance of Quit notice to Fulanis in the State. This has made national security threat to be a major issue for the government and has prompted a huge allocation of the national budget to security. Boko haram one of the terroist groups in Nigeria has conducted attacks on religious and political groups, police stations, and schools among others. The kidnapping of over two hundred girls from their school in April 2014 drew international attention to the ongoing threat from boko haram and inability of government to curtail it. In February 2018, more than one hundred students were kidnapped by a faction of Boko haram (Center for preventive action). In order to ameliorate the incidence of crime, the federal government has embarked on the criminalization of terrorism by passing the Anti-Terrorism Act in 2011, fundamental surveillance as well as investigation of criminal related offenses, heightening of physical security measures around the country aimed at deterring 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. Despite these efforts, the level of insecurity in the country is still high. (Dike, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frame work for this study is conflict theory. The conflict theory provides an insightful framework for comprehending the interplay between power struggles, social inequalities, and how they affect secondary school attendance. This perspective posits that societal conflict arises from competition for limited resources, including access to education, which often leads to tensions between different groups in society. In the context of secondary school attendance, conflict theory suggests that social and economic disparities can lead to insecurity, which can result in decreased attendance rates among certain groups of students. For instance, students from disadvantaged communities may be more likely to encounter insecurity due to the lack of access to basic resources, such as adequate housing, healthcare, and food. This, in turn, can negatively impact their attendance rates, as they may be unable to attend school due to security concerns.

Additionally, conflict theory underscores the importance of power struggles in shaping educational policies, programs, and practices. Those with more power and resources are often better positioned to influence policy decisions and shape educational outcomes, while those with less power may be marginalized and excluded from decision-making processes. This can result in policies that exacerbate existing social inequalities, further entrenching the barriers that impede the attendance of certain groups of students. Conflict theory in turn provides a valuable perspective for understanding the complex relationships between social inequalities, power struggles, and secondary school attendance. By highlighting the role of conflict in shaping educational experiences, this framework can inform policies and practices aimed at reducing the impact of insecurity on attendance rates and promoting greater equity and access to education for all students.

Major Proponents of the conflict theory adopted in this study and Their Contributions

Conflict theory has its roots in the works of Karl Marx, who believed that society is characterized by conflict and competition between different social classes. According to Marx, social classes are defined by their relationship to the means of production, and conflict arises from the struggle for control of these resources. Conflict theory suggests that societal change occurs through conflict, rather than gradual evolution. In the context of Ondo State, conflict theory can help explain the dynamics of insecurity and its impact on secondary school attendance. The conflict in Ondo State can be seen as a struggle for power and resources between different social groups, such as criminal gangs and farmers/herders. These conflicts have created an environment of fear and uncertainty, making it difficult for parents to send their children to school and for teachers to provide quality education. One of the key proponents of conflict theory is Max Weber, who believed that conflict arises not only from economic factors but also from social and cultural differences. Weber argued that social stratification is based on three factors: class, status, and power. He believed that conflict arises from the competition between these different dimensions of social stratification. In the context of Ondo State, social and cultural differences between different groups, such as farmers and herders, can also contribute to the conflict and insecurity in the region. The competition for resources such as land and water, as well as the differences in lifestyle and culture, can exacerbate the conflict between these groups, leading to violence and insecurity.

Another key proponent of conflict theory is Ralf Dahrendorf, who emphasized the importance of power and authority in understanding

conflict. Dahrendorf believed that conflict arises from the struggle for power between different groups and that power is distributed unequally in society. He argued that conflict can lead to social change and that societal stability is maintained through power relationships. In the context of Ondo State, the struggle for power between criminal gangs, farmers, and herders has contributed to the insecurity in the region. The unequal distribution of power and authority, as well as the lack of effective governance and law enforcement, has allowed criminal groups to thrive and create an environment of fear and insecurity. The proponents of conflict theory offer insights into the dynamics of insecurity and its impact on secondary school attendance in Ondo State, Nigeria. The struggle for power and resources, social and cultural differences, and the unequal distribution of power and authority are key factors that contribute to the conflict in the region. Understanding these factors is crucial for addressing the issue of insecurity and improving education and socio-economic development in the state.

Research Methodology

Data generated for this work was through Secondary source such as review of related literature, such as journal articles, books as well as oral evidence of experts.

Sources of Insecurity within Secondary Schools in Ondo State, Nigeria

These factors have been classified or grouped into external and internal factors. Beyond the external-internal dichotomy, sources of insecurity have also been classified as either remote or proximate and immediate sources/causal factors. Numerous researchers have argued that the challenge is not so much about the insecurity of external sources, but rather that of internal sources. It should be noted that some internal factors have been enhanced and strengthened by the presence of external forces, but, there is no doubt that, if the internal situations did not present themselves, the external forces would be unable to infiltrate. (Ronke, 2015). Lack of institutional capacity resulting in government failure described as the corrosion or breakdown of institutional infrastructures. The foundations of the institutional framework in Nigeria are very shaky and have provoked deterioration of state governance and democratic accountability, thus, paralyzing the existing set of constraints including the formal and legitimate rules nested in the hierarchy of social order. The state of insecurity in Nigeria is greatly a function of government failure or can be linked to government failure. This is manifested by the incapacity of the government to deliver public services and to provide basic needs for the masses. The lack of basic necessities by the people in Nigeria has created a pool of frustrated people who are ignited easily by any event to be violent.

The argument here is that Nigeria has the resources to provide for the needs of its people, but corruption in public offices at all levels has made it impossible for officeholders to focus on the provision of basic needs for the people Nigerian situation as a 'Paradox of Plenty. A situation where the country earns a great deal of revenue through oil sales but fails to use these earnings to meet the needs of its people and to develop infrastructure as well as the economy. When these situations exist, the crime rate is bound to rise and the security of lives and properties cannot be guaranteed. Suleman (2020) identifies various causes of security challenges as:

Pervasive Material Inequalities and Unfairness: Greater awareness of disparities in life is a major root cause of insecurity in Nigeria. This is a rooted general perception of inequality and unfairness which has resulted in a grievance by a large number of people. This perception stems from the perception of marginalization by a section of the people, government development policies, and political offices and this has become a primary source of disaffection and resentment. A large number of the Nigerian population is frustrated and have lost hope, especially the youths, and have now emerged to express their disillusion about the pervasive state of inequality. The activities of the avengers were responsible for the epileptic power supply in the country as well as the inability of state governors to pay workers' salaries due to the low revenue generated in the oil sector as a result of the attack on pipelines.

Ethno-Religious Conflicts: These have arisen from distrust among various ethnic groups and among the major religions in the country. Habeeb (2019) identified ethno religious conflict as a major source of insecurity in Nigeria. The ethno religious conflict was defined as a situation in which the relationship between members of one ethnic or religious group and another of such group in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society is characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion, and fear, and a tendency towards violent confrontation. Frequent and persistent ethnic conflicts and religious clashes between the two dominant religions (Islam and Christianity), present the country with a major security challenge. In all parts of Nigeria, there exist ethno religious conflicts and these according to him, have emerged as a result of new and particularistic forms of political consciousness and identity often structured around ethno religious identities.

Conflict of Perceptions between the Public and government: Over the years, there has been a standing mismatch between public and government perceptions. A situation that often results in the reactions of the public to

the excesses of the military regimes which governed Nigeria and has continued after the end of military regimes and created a sensitivity by those in government at public intrusion in matters of state.

Weak Security System: This results from inadequate equipment for the security arm of government, both in weaponry and training. This is in addition to the poor attitudinal and behavioral disposition of security personnel. In many cases, security personnel assigned to deal with given security situations lack the expertise and equipment to handle the situations in a way to prevents them from occurring.

And even when these exist, some personnel get influenced by ethnic, religious, or communal sentiment and are easily swallowed by their personal interest to serve their people, rather than the nation. Thus, instead of being national watchdogs and defending national interest and values, and protecting people from harm by criminals, they soon become saboteurs of government effort by supporting and fueling insecurity through either leaking vital security information or aiding and abetting criminals to acquire weapons or to escape the long arm of the law.

Loss of Socio-cultural and communal value system: The traditional value system of the Nigerian society like most African societies is characterized by such endearing features as collectivism, loyalty to authority and community, truthfulness, honesty, hard work, tolerance, love for others, Mutual harmony and co-existence, and identification of an individual with another (Other distinctive features of Nigerian traditional society are abhorrence for theft and high value for life. Stealing was considered extremely disgraceful and lives were also highly valued). All of these values which made society secured and safe have all gradually been thrown away and lost. New values have taken over their place over the years, with the so-called 'modernity and civilization'. All our endearing values and morals have been traded off for western values.

Porous Borders: One major immediate factor which has enhanced insecurity in Nigeria is the porous frontiers of the country, where individual movements are largely untracked. The porosity of Nigeria's borders has serious security implications for the country. Given the porous borders as well as the weak and security system, weapons come easily into Nigeria from other countries. Small Arms and Light Weapons proliferation and the availability of these weapons have enabled militant groups and criminal groups to have easy access to arms. Nigeria is estimated to host over 70 percent of about 8 million illegal weapons in West Africa. Also, the porosity of the Nigerian borders has made it possible for an unwarranted

influx of migrants from neighboring countries such as the Republic of Niger, Chad, and the Republic of Benin. These migrants which are mostly young men are some of the perpetrators of crime in the country.

Rural/Urban Drift: The migration of jobless youths from rural areas to urban centers is also one of the causes of insecurity in Nigeria. Nigeria is one of the countries in the world with very high rural/urban drift. Most urban areas in Nigeria have grown beyond their environmental carrying capacities and existing infrastructure and this has resulted in increased poor quality of the living conditions in urban areas in Nigeria. Out of frustration, these youths are drawn into crime.

Unemployment/Poverty: As a result of the high level of unemployment and poverty among Nigerians, especially the youths, they are adversely attracted to violent crime. Failure of successive administrations in Nigeria to address challenges of poverty, unemployment, and inequitable distribution of wealth among ethnic nationalities is one of the major causes of insecurity in the country.

Terrorism: At the most proximate and least disputable level, terrorism is the most fundamental source of insecurity in Nigeria today, and its primary bases and sources of support have generally been located in religious fanaticism and intolerance. As "the premeditated use or threat of use of violence by an individual or group to cause fear, destruction or death, especially against unarmed targets, property or infrastructure in a state, intended to compel those in authority to respond to the demands and expectations of the individual or group behind such violent acts" which has cost 13.4 percent of the world gross domestic product. Nigeria has lost large numbers of lives in the Northern region since 2009 to the insurgency of this infamous sect, Boko Haram which has been ravaging the northern region of the country.

The Dynamics of conflict theory and secondary school attendance in Ondo State, Nigeria

Insecurity in Ondo State, Nigeria, has significantly impacted the attendance of secondary school students. Due to the fear of violence and abduction, students are increasingly avoiding going to school in areas that are prone to insecurity. This trend has led to a significant reduction in the number of students attending school in the state. Conflict theory provides insight into the reasons behind this reduction in school attendance. Insecurity in Ondo State is linked to the struggle for power and resources among different social groups. Criminal groups, such as kidnappers and

armed robbers, use insecurity as a means of controlling and extorting money from the population. Communal conflicts, such as farmer-herder clashes, also contribute to insecurity as a result of competition for resources, particularly land and water, between the two groups. The impact of insecurity on secondary school attendance in Ondo State is evident. The fear of violence and abduction has resulted in many parents withdrawing their children from school, while others are reluctant to send their children to school. Moreover, teachers in areas affected by insecurity are often afraid to attend school, which affects the quality of education provided to students. The reduction in school attendance has significant implications for the education and socio-economic development of Ondo State. Education is a fundamental human right and a crucial factor for socio-economic development. The reduction in school attendance can lead to a decline in the quality of education provided to students and, ultimately, limit their prospects for the future. To address the issue of insecurity and its impact on secondary school attendance in Ondo State, the government must take proactive measures. The government must provide security for students and teachers, as well as school infrastructure, to ensure that students can attend school without fear of violence or abduction. The government can also provide financial support to families who cannot afford to send their children to school due to insecurity.

The reduction in secondary school attendance in Ondo State is a significant concern that needs urgent attention. The dynamics of conflict theory are evident in the insecurity situation in the state, and addressing the root causes of insecurity is crucial for improving education and socio-economic development in Ondo State. The government must take proactive measures to ensure the security of students and teachers and provide financial support to families who cannot afford to send their children to school due to insecurity. Ultimately, addressing insecurity is crucial for the future of the state and the country at large.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings so that insecurity has a serious effect on secondary school students' attendance in school. The attendance in various degree such as occasional missing school due to the fear of insecurity on the way to school, especially in rural areas to actual drop out from school in such area where security threat is persistence in Ondo State. The recommendations made were among others that government should provide conducive environment in and outside the school environment for the improvement of students' academic achievement and teachers' job performance. Similarly, school administrators are charged to provide digital learning and modern school

management techniques. The researcher however suggested that this study be replicated by other researchers using different location and environment and also to confirm or refute its validity and to expand the scope of work previously done. It is also suggested that a study be carried out on the influence of security challenges on teachers' job performance and commitment using another location.

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