

SCHOOLING AMIDST INSECURITY AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA: A PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW

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Abstract

No nation can grow beyond its level of educational growth and development, the need to sufficiently secure vulnerable school atmosphere cannot be over-exaggerated. So, the paper argues and reiterates that sporadic and incessant school abductions originated from lack of proactive security preparedness and commitments by our security personnel and the other stakeholders. Students are risking their lives for schooling as they are being attacked on almost daily basis by bandits, kidnappers and Boko Haram terrorists. Therefore, there is need for the entire educational system, its personnel and its structure to be adequately secured. Conceptual analyses of security, insecurity and economic challenges/hardship have been made where their meanings have been examined. Recent school abductions had been highlighted and school attending amidst insecurity and economic challenges had also been scrutinized. Lastly, conclusion together with some recommendations were made.

Keywords: Schooling, Security, Insecurity, Economic Challenges/Hardship

Introduction

Our schools are being attacked on almost daily basis by bandits, kidnappers and Boko Haram terrorists. Therefore, students are risking their lives for schooling. Reminiscent of some parts of the world, schooling comes with its share of challenges but when students risk losing their right for education and lives at school, our future is under attack. Sending students to schools is synonymous to appeal for ransom payment or approaching the battle field along with a swarm of bullets. What likelihood do Nigerian children have for a better education. The upshot of these attacks has further aggravated the delicate school system which is adversative to sustainable and national development. As claimed by government, numerous measures have been taken in addressing this menace but there are

still incessant and frequent attacks being experienced by the students and teachers in the school surrounding areas. If these incessant attacks are not proactively dealt with, it will portend a longer term danger to peace, tranquility and eminence of labour force and human capital needed to drive a serene environment for sustainable economic growth and development. The recent increase of mass kidnappings of students most especially in Northwest unarguably represented the momentous existential menace and catastrophe to the entire education system. On the other hand, the tempo of current economic hardship raises questions on the economic policies, patterns of decisions, actions and mechanisms undertaking by previous and current

government for addressing the issue of poverty and attaining economic growth. As we can all analyze, Nigerians are passing through a survivalist stage as they are on a daily basis confronted by skyrocketing prices of commodities. Cost of living is at an all-time high owing to the high rate of inflation which is sweeping through the nation's economy. Prices of most consumer and non-consumer items are soaring and going out of the reach of the average Nigerian family, and there are few signs that things will get better anytime soon. Are incessant insecurity issues (banditry and kidnapping) and the prevailing disturbing economic atmosphere a great test for this administration's competence to govern effectively and solve the problems before it?

Conceptual Analysis

Concept of Security

To define insecurity appropriately, it is important to have a concise dialogue on what security is. The primary responsibility of a government is to keep its citizens protected from any type of menace. As Akintunde and Musa (2016) opined, security is a basic human need that contributes to efficient learning. Psychologists hypothesized that security is essential for human continued existence. Following the supposition of hierarchy of needs by Abraham Maslow, the lower needs of man like food, shelter and security must be met before other higher needs like education or intellectual/cognitive needs (Akintunde and Musa, 2016). The incapability to satisfy the need for security may result in stress in individuals and hamper them from pursuing higher level needs. Generally, security is seen as the condition of safety, freedom from danger and defense from physical harm. Logically, human beings blossom in security and are impulsively determined by the need to maximize available resources to guarantee their physical, physiological and psychological welfare. This implies that security is not only restricted to protection from physical harm. Security also involves existence of environmental factors that instill peace of

mind in an individual in order to empower him to function in the society effectively.

As Hobbes (1651) observed, only the state has the capability to assure security and save society from lawlessness, the state through its government should afford sufficient security to rationalize its *raison d'être* (Gaskin, 1996). Omede (2012) perceived security as a dynamic circumstance which involves the relative ability of a state to counteract intimidation and coercion to its most significant values and interests. McGrew (2014) holds that the security of a nation sling on two important pillars which are firstly the maintenance and fortification of the socioeconomic order in the facade of internal and external menace and the promotion of a favored international order, which diminishes the menace to core values and interests, as well as to the domestic order. As perceived by Nwolise (2006), security is an all encircling condition which proposes that a territory must be secured by a network of armed forces; that the sovereignty of the state must be guaranteed by a democratic and patriotic government, which in turn must be protected by the military, police, any other security personnel and the people themselves; that the people must not only be secured from external attacks but also from devastating consequences of internal upheavals such as unemployment, hunger, starvation, diseases, ignorance, homelessness, environmental degradation and pollution and socio-economic injustices. So, all the aforementioned aspects are threats to populace of a given state which they must to be secured from by any responsible government. This affirmation proved that there is dialectical correlation between unemployment, hunger, diseases, ignorance, homelessness, etc and insecurity. This paper has appraised the argument further by highlighting that Nigeria's security should be based on a holistic scrutiny which perceives the citizens as the most important beneficiaries of every security and developmental deliverable that the country can proffer. From the variety of

explanations of security aforementioned, it can be rationally inferred that insecurity implies a state of vulnerability to attacks, danger or threats to a people, their properties, cherished values and the inability of the nation to protect its citizenry.

Concept of Insecurity

On the contrary, insecurity is the direct opposite of security and has attracted such common descriptors as danger, hazard, and uncertainty, want of confidence, state of doubt, inadequately guarded or protected, unsteadiness, instability, and being unsafe, etc (Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Robaro, 2013). They also argue further that these common descriptors point to a circumstance where there exists a vulnerability to harm, loss of life, property or livelihood. Therefore, they consider insecurity to be a state of not knowing, a lack of control, and the inability to take defensive action against forces that portend harm or danger to an individual or group, or that make them vulnerable. For Beland (2005), insecurity is “the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection.” It refers to lack or inadequate freedom from threats. This description reflects physical insecurity which is the most perceptible form of insecurity, and it feeds into numerous other forms of insecurity such as economic security and social security. In this paper, insecurity is conceived as a situation where human and national security of a state is compromised by internal forces aggravated by illiteracy, unemployment, poor economic conditions, inadequate and poor modern security facilities, inadequate security personnel, etc. Alemika (n. d.) postulated that insecurity can be classified into several magnitudes. The most significant magnitudes are:

- Physical insecurity- violent personal and property crimes,
- Public security- violent conflicts, insurgency and terrorism,
- Economic insecurity- poverty and unemployment,

- Social insecurity- illiteracy, ignorance, diseases or illness, malnutrition; water borne disease, discrimination and exclusion,
- Human right violations- denial of fundamental rights by state and non-state actors in different states,
- Political insecurity- denial of good and social democratic governance.

The scopes of security as highlighted above are interlaced and cannot be treated in strict isolation as explicated by Anan (1998) that nowadays it is known that “security” means far more than absence of conflict. Lasting peace requires an extensive image of surrounding areas such as education, health, democracy and human rights, etc. Society cannot be secured amidst starvation, that we cannot build peace without alleviating poverty, and that we cannot build freedom on the foundations of injustice. Condoleezza Rice posited that quality education of a nation is a direct function of a country's national security (Ejirika, 2014). This relationship springs from the role education plays in providing the knowledge base for technological training. In the main, education is as important as national security. Therefore, Shuaibu (2015), postulates that a safe school is one that fosters peaceful, positive or cordial relationships among students, teachers and administrators.

Economic Challenges/Hardship in Nigeria

The economic problems in Nigeria have always been a subject of debate in schools, social platforms, and even the state and national assemblies. It has been postulated that the citizens and leaders have many times failed to make things right initially in policy formulations and implementations, rules of governance and law. It seems that if our country continues this way, then economic growth will continue to be dwindling. The economic problem, sometimes called challenges or hardship refer to circumstances whereby there is scarcity, or that the limited resources available are inadequate to satisfy

all human wants and needs. Economic challenge/hardship is defined as the incapability or struggle to meet reasonable essential living expenses such as food and shelter. The astonishing fact is that in recent years, vast majority of families had at least one or more serious economic hardship, which could include worries about having food, clothes, school fees, inadequate healthcare or medication, and many more (Cunningham, 2019). Economic hardship is experienced by other sectors of the population as well, particularly in recent years. These factors signal that several sectors of the population who may have been economically stable in some years back are now at risk of economic hardship as well.

There are diverse causes of economic hardship, including large number of dependents or family, unemployment, employment instability, illiteracy, illnesses, physical disabilities, or caring for members of your family who are sick. As well, the cause of economic hardship may be poor financial management skills, inflation, war, scarcity, poor government policy, poor and inadequate infrastructures and poor power supply, insecurity, poor leadership and corruption, etc. Some causes are systemic in nature which arises from poor monetary policies, poor policy implementation by governments through targeted economic policies. Economic hardship has a reflective impact on family dynamics and can result in the breakdown of marriages and relationships, suicide, crimes, school dropout, etc. This in turn can lead to trauma for both parents and children, which then puts them at a greater risk of developing behavior problems, mental disorders or physical health issues. As elucidated by Cunningham (2019) growing up in an economically disadvantaged family circle places children at a high risk of adjustment disorders. This indicates, then, that economic hardships effects on a family can be recurring and intergenerational in nature, being felt by many future generations.

What are the effects of economic

hardship? Taken as a whole, economic hardship has been found by researchers to effectually affect the well-being of family members, and individuals with economic difficulties suffer from lower levels of well-being, depending on their life experiences and support networks. Therefore, it is imperative for governments and any stakeholders to put policies in to appropriate place to lessen economic hardship in this country. These include good policies that will create more jobs, mechanized and modern farming system, skills acquisition centers, entrepreneurships, free interest loans, lower the costs of living, and forgive debts with accumulated interests. These policies should be implemented along with equality of educational opportunities whereby families who have been affected by intergenerational economic hardship can find out how to break the sequence of poverty and new initiatives.

Recent Account of School Abductions in Nigeria

The history of kidnapping in the North-West zone of Nigeria could be traced to hostilities, conflicts and violence between farmers and herders. Kidnapping, which is the act of abducting somebody and keeping him/her as a hostage in order to get a ransom for his/her release, swiftly look on a whole new economic attractiveness in the North-West of Nigeria. This latest black economy blossoms in the almost entire North-West and North-Central zones which includes Katsina, Sokoto, Kaduna, Zamfara and Niger states, where students, farmers, passengers, prominent politicians and villagers of the states were easily targeted by usually Fulani bandits (DW News, 1st September, 2021). The past three years have been reasonably coarse for populace of the aforementioned states and the remaining Nigerians.

Topical school kidnapping began on December 11, 2020, when 344 male students were abducted from their hostels at Government Science Secondary School, Kankara, Katsina State. Two weeks later on

December 20, 2020, eighty pupils of an Islamiyya School, Mahuta, Kaduna State were again abducted. Also, on February 17th, 2021, there was another outburst of rage when 27 students were abducted from GSS College, Kagara, Niger State. In Zamfara State, 279 additional girls of Government Secondary School Jangebe were abducted on February 26, 2021. The Federal College of Forestry Mechanization, Afaka, Kaduna State as well had its fair share of the insecurity, when 39 of its students were kidnapped on March 11, 2021. Afterward, another bandit attacked and kidnapped 23 students of Greenfield University, Kaduna State. It was reported that millions of Naira were raised by the parents and relatives and paid to the bandits as ransom before their release. But unfortunately, four Greenfield students were killed by stray bullets as asserted by police. Recently, around 136 Islamiyya schoolchildren were abducted at Tegna town of Niger state. After six of them died of illness in captivity, 130 children were released on August 27, 2021 after paying ransom to the bandits (Reuters, 2021). The families who had their children back are left with sundry joy in spite of multitude of debts. Even on this Wednesday, 1st September, 2021, seventy three students were kidnapped by bandits in Kayan Maradun the hometown of the sitting Governor of Zamfara state (DW News, 1st September, 2021). Even though students' kidnapping is not peculiar to only North-west zone but nobody can deny that it is the worst-hit zone so far (DW News, 1st September, 2021). In spite of all these, only few of bandits were arrested, prosecuted and tried for their crimes regardless of comforting press releases from the presidency. It appears that banditry, as it were, has become a lucrative business in Nigeria. As a result, several states are closing boarding schools in affected areas. Certainly, this will increase the number of out-of-school children in Nigerian.

Schooling amidst Insecurity and Economic Challenges Nigeria

Under Rousseau's theory of social contract, individuals have surrendered and consented either explicitly or implicitly their freedoms and submit to the authority of a given nation in exchange for protection of their remaining rights or maintenance of the social order (Gita, 2002). Therefore, we can simply infer from the above assertion that power in the society is formed initially in order to have security of lives and properties. Beside this, children's right to education has been recognized as a human right in number of international conventions by world countries which Nigeria is among, (United Nation Treaty Collections, 2021). So, is this right going to be a dream to Nigerian children due to incessant students' abduction by bandits, kidnappers and Boko Haram activities?

Systematized students' kidnapping commenced in 2014 with the mass abduction of 276 female students in Chibok by Boko Haram terrorists. Currently, organized and unorganized students' abduction by bandits, kidnappers and even by Boko Haram terrorists themselves has turn out to be a lucrative business. These incessant attacks are becoming a threat to children's constitutional right to education and infringe on efficient teaching and learning process and serve as flipside to our national development. As opined by Akintunde and Musa (2016), timid school environment pessimistically influences the process of teaching and learning of students. Circumstances of insecurity generate disturbing disorder and deleterious stress that influence learning negatively. The entire school attendance and enrolments are regularly affected as parents withdraw their children from schools while in some tremendous cases insecurity has led to closure of numerous schools both in rural and urban areas. For example, Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara, Niger and Borno are states where classes were suspended for some couple of weeks and some schools were shut as a result of incessant bandits' attacks. Insurgency

ultimately and habitually lead to theft, vandalism and absolute destruction of school facilities which consequently discourage the establishment of new schools. As a result, government insufficient budgeted resources meant for education are directed and exhausted on tackling the aftermath of the attacks. As a final point, number of illiterates, out-of-school-children and dropout students and consequently educational attainment in terms of sound education, quality of graduates and manpower suffers which impinge on overall national development ambitions. It is unarguably believed that no nation can grow ahead of its level of educational growth, the need to sufficiently secure vulnerable school atmosphere cannot be exaggerated. There is need to overhaul the entire school settings security architecture in order to have conducive atmosphere for effective and successful schooling. Also, the profit dimension to students' kidnapping is worsening the security problems as it is becoming more frequent in furnishing the high level of poverty and unemployment in the affected states due to the halt and dearth of legitimate economic opportunities like farming, etc. it is vital to urgently address the current dynamics and make schools secured again for education to survive.

The Way Forward to Insecurity and Economic Hardship

It is right to scrupulously examine the situation and tell ourselves the bitter truth. Insecurity is devastating our country and it is going beyond tolerable levels. It is not the right time for 'blame games' by saying that it has been sponsored, perpetuated and exaggerated by saboteurs, insiders, or politically designed by political opponents, etc as pointed out by President's spokesperson, Garba Shehu (Vanguard News, August, 2021). Who is responsible for finding out the saboteurs, or their sponsors? Is it not an attempt by government to scamper and whisk away from its primary responsibility of providing security to its

citizens that are on daily basis losing their lives and properties? Therefore, government must spearhead the responsibility of protecting the citizens by finding out these saboteurs and unpatriotic politicians that are allegedly sponsoring the criminals. Current insecurity issues and economic challenges are threats to our coexistence and fragile unity that could lead to irrecoverable collapse of our education system and indivisibility and indissolubility of Nigeria. Recently, out-going military service chiefs have been prejudicially conferred with ambassadorial positions (The Guardian Newspaper, 2021). Therefore, allotment of succulent positions to accused out-going and retired military personnel as gratification did by current administration should be halted as it will further encourage them to be unenthusiastic, loosed and unresponsive to their primary duties (The Cable Newspaper, 2021). Our leaders and some shallow-minded people dispute and rebuff to accept the extent of economic hardship and effects of insecurity that plague the country even though evidences of bad governance and failures are palpably manifested. But recently, President Buhari himself (Vanguard Newspaper, August, 2021) and governor Masari of Katsina state (The Guardian Newspaper, 18th August, 2021) admitted candidly that their administrations failed woefully to provide efficient security to their citizens. Consequently, this might be a reason to overhaul the security operatives and provide the security personnel with sophisticated apparatus as Mr. President threatened to rejig the security architecture in order to achieve the desired result and have a secured environment.

Corrupt military and security personnel that are selling and supplying weapons to bandits, kidnappers and Boko Haram members should be arrested and prosecuted indiscriminately so as to serve as deterrent to others (Leadership Newspaper, 24th August, 2020). Military and security personnel are inadequate and overstretched (Daily Post Newspaper, 25th August, 2021) as large

number are being killed in the line of duty, retired or voluntarily leaving the service while regular recruitments cannot meet up the expected adequate and needed number. And this indicates that the situation requires more tactful, ingenious and innovative ideas in order to tackle the security challenges in Nigeria. Therefore, special and supplementary recruitments should be organized to tactfully tackle the issues and also, additional number of security personnel should be given to the affected areas. Adequate security personnel should be deployed to our porous borders so as to address the menace of arms smuggling. Mutual understanding between farmers and herders should be reaffirmed and promoted by the government and all the stakeholders by for example, implementing the proposed cattle ranching to tackle the issues of open grazing. Nigeria's National Security Adviser, Major General Babagana Monguno (rtd), has said a huge amount of money approved for purchase of weapons under President Muhammadu Buhari cannot be accounted for. He said when the newly appointed Service Chiefs assumed office, they did not find the weapons that their predecessors ought to have purchased (Daily Trust Newspapers, 12th Mar, 2021). So, allocation of weapons supply to military personnel should be avoided as it open avenue for corruption and violates world countries' convention.

On the economic hardship Mr. Lai Mohammed (Minister of Information and Culture) said, 'We are working on hunger.' He also said, "We are going to address the issue of the prevailing economic hardship and hunger situations which is widespread. The President is not oblivious of the pains of the people, and is working with the Vice-President and other members of council. He is going to implore the relevant ministries, departments and agencies, MDAs of government to address this issue. "As far as this is concerned, it's also an emergency situation that people should not be left to wallow in widespread hunger, and in despair.

We plausibly know that the conditions cannot be tolerated if we are truly a habitation of rational people" (Vanguard Newspaper, August, 2021).

Public enlightenment should be employed to prevent deviant behaviors in the affected communities on effects of the insecurity most especially on education and the entire economic growth and development. Government together with all the stakeholders should promote local businesses, small-scale industries and provision of skills acquisition centers through aids, empowerments, non-interest bank loans, etc. as it is well known that some abject poverty and economic hardship ignite crimes sometimes (Vanguard Newspaper, August, 2021). Adequate social amenities like good access road, infrastructures, massive housing, and uninterrupted good electricity supply, etc ease economic hardship and increase the betterment and wellbeing of the people. Therefore, government, NGOs and all stakeholders should provide them adequately. Some of the criminals that have been arrested were bailed out by unscrupulous court personnel, and some are not being properly prosecuted and trialed due to alleged corruption. So, right laws with severe punishments should be enacted by our legislatures, enforced and executed by competent judges in the courts of law. Steps in the right direction should be taken holistically in addressing the socio-economic factors that facilitate crimes of banditry, kidnapping, etc. Schools must invest in security structures like surveillance, intelligence, periodic patrols, etc to make the staff and the students less vulnerable to attacks.

Conclusion

Nigerians are exhausted of 'blame games' which subsequent and present governments used to hide. Politicization of the security issues and economic hardship/challenges by governments, security personnel or any other stakeholder should be stopped. It is the precise time for government to shoulder its primary

responsibility of providing sufficient security to its citizens. Power and authority in the society or nation is formed primarily for the purpose of securing the lives and properties of the people. Citizens' right for education should not be a dream due to incessant students' abduction by bandits, kidnappers and Boko Haram members.

Recommendations

- Emir of Muri's ultimatum to Fulani leaders to point out or arrest and hand over any known and suspected kidnappers, bandits or their informants should be emulated by relevant authorities.
- To sufficiently secure school atmosphere, there is need to overhaul the entire school settings security architecture with joint surveillance, intelligence, periodic patrols with trusted and registered armed local security element like hunters and vigilante members.
- There is need to review the curriculum of Nigerian education at all levels in line with the prevailing situations and in such a way that it will make beneficiaries job creators rather than job seekers, i.e. to have synergy between education, vocational studies and entrepreneurship skills for self-employment.
- Lip-service to security issues by security personnel, government officials and its representatives must be stopped as it is synonymous to sitting on a time-bomb which may soon explode anytime.
- Government should face the issue squarely once and for all as these crises require swift and comprehensive action by all stakeholders.
- Instead of directing people to take arms for self-defense, youth of the affected areas should be recruited as security personnel and should be sent to spearhead the menace together with experienced and professional security personnel.
- Border closure should be readdressed as skyrocketing of food commodities prices is clearly linked to the inaccessibility of farms located in areas controlled and taken over by rampaging bandits, kidnappers and Boko Haram.
- Government and all the stakeholders should promote local businesses, small-scale industries and provision of skills acquisition centers through aids, empowerments, non-interest bank loans, etc as it is well known that some abject poverty and economic hardship ignite crimes sometimes.

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