Community Participation in Schools' Security: A Future Fit Strategy for Solving the Challenges of School Attacks in Northern Nigeria.

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Abstract
This study examined community participation in school security as a future fit strategy for solving the challenges of schools' attacks in Northern Nigeria. Today, education in Northern Nigeria is under attacks. The wave of abductions have devastating consequence for the region, which already has the highest number of children out of education in the country. Some of the key drivers of these attacks are; religious extremism, lack of political will on the part of government, irresponsible parenting, poverty and unemployment among others. The vision of safe schools for the future must involve communities in the protection of educational facilities in their domain. The study identified the following ways in which a community can participates in the protection of schools from attacks. These are; sensitization and mobilization of community members on the danger of irresponsible parenting, establishment of community vigilante to protect schools from attacks, collaboration and partnership with the government security agencies for surveillances, education of members on the activities of Boko Haran which is a pervasion of Islamic ideology, intelligent gathering by host community about schools' attacks among others. The paper suggested that community members must prevail on the government at all levels in the region to develop political will that will end schools' attacks, strengthening the intelligence-gathering capacity of the host community, educate their members on the danger of irresponsible parenting and establishment of community safety and security committee. The study further suggested among others that there should be a concerted community enlightenment programmed that will declare 'Boko Haram' a perversion of religion and not an Islamic ideology.

Key Words: Community participation, Schools' security, Future fit strategy, Challenges, Schools' attacks

Introduction

Education is a basic human right and the right to education is under attacks in Nigeria. Education is very fundamental to growth and development of any nation. NAN (2021) quoted the United Nations secretary-general who revealed that between 2015 and 2020, over 13,000 reports of strikes on education, or the military use of educational

facilities has been recorded around the world. Attacks on schools and students is a major threat to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 which focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong opportunity for all. All children have the right to education in a safe environment free of violence and harassment. Attacks on schools and other educational facilities constitute a grave violation of the rights of children and human rights more broadly (United Nations, 2021).Attacks on schools must stop and schools should be safe for schooling. Schools must be places of learning, safety and peace as education is not only providing knowledge and skills but also transforming lives and driving development for people, communities and for societies (NAN, 2021).

For over a decade, Nigeria as a nation has been fraught with insecurity challenges, from Boko Haram and their ISWAP counterparts to bandits, kidnapping, herdsmen attacks and unknown gun men. Nigeria is facing a growing and disparate security challenges. The attacks on schools are not uncommon. It is the number of students kidnapped that is unprecedented. Thousands of children in the region have been killed, maimed, abducted, displaced, and experienced multiple violations of their human rights (Are, 2021). Boko Haran in the North East and Bandits in the North West are running amok almost unhindered despite the claimed by government that Boko Haran has been "technically defeated". Akomolafe (2021) stated that 25 schools had been attacks and 1440 pupils abducted in Nigeria within fifteen months. This shows the extent of the grave violations of children' rights in the region. Children must have an opportunity to grow, learn, work and contribute to healthy future of this region and this can only happen if schools are protected from attacks.

In the year 2014, over 276 students were abducted from Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok, Borno State (Ezea, 2018). This sparked a global outage and condemnation for the then Jonathan administration. New Telegraph (2014) quoted the Borno state Governor who painted the grim picture of the state of education in his state that is the epicenter of the insurgency by saying that the terrorist group has destroyed about 900 schools and killed 176 teachers since 2011.In recent times, the frequency of these abductions have become a nightmare to both parents and the students. BBC News (2021) reported that kidnappers have seized more than 1,000 students and staff in a series of raids across Northern Nigeria. The wave of abductions have devastating consequence for the region, which already has the highest number of children out of education in the country. Many parents had withdrawn their children from school, government also ordered the immediate closure of all boarding schools due to insecurity. On December 11, 2020, over 344 male students were abducted from their hostels in Government Science Secondary School, Kankara, Kastina State. On December 20, 2020, 80 pupils of the Islamiyya School, Mahuta, Kaduna state were abducted. In Zamfara State, 279 female students were abducted on the 26th February, 2021from Government Secondary School, Jangebe. On February 17, 2021,27 students were abducted from Government Secondary School, Kagara, Niger State. 39 students from Federal College of Forestry Mechanization, Afaka, Kaduna State were abducted on the 11th day of March 2021. Greenfield University, kaduna State and Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Benue State also had their share of the insecurity as 23 students and 3 were kidnapped from the school respectively.In fact the list is endless. Many students and staff of secondary and tertiary institutions in Northern Nigeria were kidnapped in 2021. Some were killed during the invasions, many regained their

freedom, while others are still in captivity.

Below is the tabular representation of schools' attacks in Northern Nigeria from December 2020 to July 2021.

List of schools attacks in Northern Nigeria from December 2020–July 2021

S/No	Date	Schools Attacks	State	Number Kidnapped	Number of Death
1	11/12/2020	Government Science School, Kankara	Kastina	344	Nil
2	20/12/2020	Islamiyya school, Mahuta	Kaduna	80	Nil
3	17/2/2021	Government Science College, Kagara	Niger	27	1
4	26/2/2021	Government Secondary School, Jangebe	Zamfara	279	Nil
5	11/3/2021	Federal College of Forestry Mechanisation, Afaka	Kaduna	39	Nil
6	11/3/2021	Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi	Benue	3	Nil
7	20/4/2021	Greenfield University, Kaduna	Kaduna	23	5
8	17/6/2021	Federal Government College, Yauri	Kebbi	100	Nil
9	5/7/2021	Bethel Baptist High School, Kaduna	Kaduna	121	Nil

The region is under daily bombardment by terrorists with hundreds of poor people murdered, maimed and displaced. Farmers can no longer access their farms, houses are burnt, businesses destroyed, villages sacked, cattle rustled and schools are under attacks. Today, education is under attack as students risk losing their freedom or lives at school to terrorists. In fact, the risk of schooling in northern Nigeria today is death. There is no day that someone is not killed between Zamfara, Niger, Kaduna, Sokoto and Katsina. There is no tribe that is spared, gunmen kill, soldiers kill, vigilante kill. In fact, whoever you see with a gun today in Nigeria, uses it to kill people(Omilana 2021). These gangs seem to be driven by financial motives with no ideological learnings. The bandit conflict in Northern Nigeria is an ongoing conflict between the government and various gangs and ethnic militias in the region. About 80% of out-of-school children are in Northern Nigeria. Lawal (2018), observed that for more than eight years, the conflict in the north east and the resulting humanitarian crisis is devastating the lives of millions of children, women and their families. With children under 15 year of age accounting for about 45 per cent of the country's population, the burden of education and other sectors has become overwhelming. With security system destabilized, schools closed due to insecurity and extreme poverty ravaging the core north, these former students are ready targets for terrorists' recruitment.

Adedeji and Marco (2021) observed that the recent spate of mass kidnapping of school children arguably represents the gravest existential threat and crisis to the education system. The Northern Nigeria which is already the most educationally disadvantaged region with over 10.5 million out-of-school children where cultural practices and economic deprivation limit children active participation in school particularly females, Boko Haram is also heavily concentrated in the region(Boma 2021). Today, community and parental trust is shrinking significantly, and the problem of access to quality and equitable education is severely amplified. Nigeria policymakers, school leaders, and community must effectively and creatively come together to help reverse the current economic and educational dynamics to avoid a catastrophic collapse. Boma (2021) further opined that the Nigerian government has to

understand that insecurity in the nation requires a proactive economic plan, accompanied by wealth of opportunities to help engage its people in productive activities that can help them to dream of a better tomorrow. Insecurity in Nigeria has invincible social sponsors like poverty and unemployment. The basic development infrastructures like electricity to enhance the industrialization of the nation in order to create employment opportunities is lacking, thereby crippling other effort to drive the economic resurgence of the 7th most populous nation in the world. The government must accelerate steps toward industrialization, and create not just opportunities but an enabling environment to help their people dream differently. Owonikoko (2021) observed that schooling in North is like suicide mission. Sanni (2015) clearly stated hundreds of teachers have been killed; thousands of students have either been killed or wounded; hundreds of class rooms have been damaged or burnt; hundreds of female students have been kidnapped in their various hostel and on their way to or from school; female teenage hostages have been turned to suicide bombers; parents have been forced to keep their daughters away from schools and many schools have been forced to close down.

It is true that the major responsibility of government is to ensure the safety of lives and properties of its citizens. It is also true that government alone cannot solve the problem of schools' attacks, hence the needs for community participation in solving the challenges of schools' attacks in Northern Nigeria. The purpose of this study is to examine the challenges of schools' attacks in Northern Region and highlights the strategic roles of the community which hosts the schools.

Education and Schools' Attacks in Northern Nigeria

A school is an institution where teaching and learning takes place both in the classroom and outside the classroom. In Northern Nigeria, education is under attacks. Boko Haran attacked on northeast have severely hampered access to education in the region and, despite promises by the government to secure schools, attacks and killing continue. A key component of Boko Haran's ideology is hostility toward secular education, and it has gained notoriety for its repeated attacks on schools, wreaking havoc on already fragile education system. Kastina, Kaduna and Zamfara states are hot beds for banditry and other forms of insecurity. This violence which is rooted in competition over resources between predominantly Fulani herders and mostly Hausa farmers has escalated amid a boom in organized crime, including cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom and village raids. In the North central state of Benue, Plateau and Niger herdsmen attacks schools, burnt classrooms, destroyed teaching and learning equipment and facilities. Many residents have been killed while many including pupils are kidnapped for ransom. Telecommunication services were shut down as part of measures to tackle security challenges in the state of Kastina, Kaduna and Zamfara. The operation of commercial motorcyclists and tricyclic were restricted, sales of animals at some selected markets was suspended and the sale of fuel to motorists was restricted. Other measures taken by government were; a ban on the sale of second-hand motorcycles, ban on interstate transportation of cattle and a ban on Lorries and Trucks from carrying firewood from the bush. However, despite all these measures, the attacks

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on schools continue. Mohammed (2021) observed that bandits operating in Kastina State are using Radio Frequency Walkie Talkie Transceivers to overcome the shutdown of Telecommunications service in the state. Awofade and Sardauna (2021) revealed the report of UNICEF which stated that no fewer than 1436 school children have been abducted in Nigeria, mainly North Central and North West in the last two years. The report further revealed that at least 16 school children lost their lives to different non-state armed attacks in the federation while 17 teachers were kidnapped from schools. Some of the key drivers for continue schools' attacks in Northern Nigeria are;

1.   **Religious Extremism.**

One the major challenges of school attacks in Northern Nigeria is religious extremism. The concept of Boko Haram which means that western education is forbidden has led to the destruction of schools' building and the killing of both teachers and students in the region. Boko Haran promotes a version of Islam which makes it 'haran' or forbidden, for Muslims to take part in any political or social activity associated with western society. This includes voting in elections, wearing shirts and trousers or receiving a secular education (BBC News, 2016). In Northern Nigeria, there has been resistance among some Muslims to western education. Many still refuse to send their children to government-run "western schools", a problem compounded by the ruling elite which does not see education as a priority. This group has launched mass attacks on villages and towns, looting, killing, abducting women and children and conscripting men and boys into their army.

2.   **Poverty and Unemployment.**

Sahara reporters (2021) observed that one of the major underlying drivers of schools' attacks and general insecurity in Northern Nigeria is poverty. The chronic poverty and poor education system in the region is helping terrorist gaining new recruits. Poverty is one of the greatest obstacles to education in Northern Nigeria, and parents' ability to pay for school expenses has been further impeded by conflict. In the Northern Region, especially Zamfara state which is home to the highest number of poor and vulnerable people in Nigeria, many youths have no secondary school education. A person is considered to live in extreme poverty when he or she is living on less than $1.90 per day. This account for why bandits have a huge reservoir of recruits which they continuously tap from. There is an inter relationship among education, unemployment, poverty and insecurity. Lack of quality education leads to unemployment, unemployment leads to poverty and poverty breeds insecurity. Many streets in the region are characterized by joblessness and crime where the youths are easily recruited to terrorist groups.

3.   **Lack of political will on the part of federal government.**

The failure of the government to act decisively on insecurity has imperiled the social and economic activities in various parts of the country. The United Nationchief called on Nigeria authorities to "spare no effort in rescuing those abducted and holding to account those responsible for this act" (United Nations,

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2021). As at present, despite this called, no notable sponsor of banditry has been arrested.It seems that the government lack the political will and determination to confront the challenges headlong. The privileges afforded to terrorists and kidnappers by this administration is one of the strongest motivators of the menace today. The government rehabilitates terrorists, but their victims languish in refugee camps.Omilana (2021) quoted a group of bandits who said that "we supported Buhari when he first became Nigeria's president and the president has not rewarded their gesture". "An agreement was reached, but you left that person in the forest with a gun and nothing to substitute. What do you expect? How do you want that person to survive? All the promises made to us, none of it was fulfilled"."There is no allocation in the budget for nomadic communities, their forest and grazing areas were taken over". These bandits blamed the government for not solving the problems facing their community, insisting that the president must physically come to dialogue with its members. It is important to note that the government should do the needful by disclosing the nature of agreement reached with the bandits and promises made to them.

4.   **Parental Irresponsibility**

Many parents in the region today cannot take care of their families. The Almajiri system that provides an outlet and drainage for the excess children at home has been abolished by the 19 Northern Governors during the period of Covid 19(RipplesNigeria, 2020).One of the issue to be addressed in Northern Nigeria is how parents will take responsibility of their children upbringing to avoid been misguided by the terrorists. Children should live with their parents for moral upbringing. Umar (2019) quoted the Nasarawa State Governor, AbdullahiSule who said that parents must take responsibility for their children upbringing. According to him, 'you cannot bring children to this world and dump them somewhere and expect somebody else to take care of them'. Parents must not shy away from their responsibility. SanusiLamido was quoted by Wahab (2020) that there are people who cannot afford to feed one wife but are ready to marry three wives and have more children than they cannot feed, talk less of paying for their school fees. Oladipupo (2020) quoted Governor Masiri of Kastina State who said that the absence of education and family planning virtues are why the residents give birth to children they cannot cater for. This parental irresponsibility of not providing the basic necessities of life (food, shelter and clothing) for these children made them become venerable and easily brainwashed and conscripted into radicalism and other forms of nefarious activities such as banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery, drug trafficking among others resulting in schools' attacks in the region.

5.   **Failure of intelligence-gathering.** Giles (2020) quoted the Sultan of Sokoto, a prominent Nigeria Islamic leader who said "how can one explain the movement of the bandits in their hundreds on motorcycles without being detected?" "What happens to intelligence-gathering that this heinous plan was not uncovered before it was hatched?" The major problem, however, has been the widespread public

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distrust of the security forces. Mohammed (2021) stated that many communities have complained that when they send reports of impending attacks to the military or police, there is no response. This breeds mistrust against security agencies resulting in intelligence-gathering failure.

The Community and Schools' Security in Northern Nigeria

Attacks on schools occur in conflict-affected environment where students and teachers are killed, maimed, or kidnapped. Schools are bombed, burned or taken over for military purpose and these impede teaching and learning. Local knowledge and skills are crucial in the fight to protect students, educators and schools from attacks. It is important to recognize the role that communities can play in safeguarding schools. If we encourage inclusiveness in communities, we can curb attacks on schools and create a peaceful society. Unsafe schools as a result of attacks on schools and abduction of children are reprehensive and a brutal violation of the rights of children to education. Attacks on learning institutions render the learning environment insecure and discourage parents and caregivers from sending their wards to schools, while the leaners themselves become fearful of the legitimate pursuit of learning. These occurrences cut short the future and dreams of the victim hence the need for community involvement. Some of these strategic roles of the community are;

1.   **Intelligent gathering.**

One of the major roles of community members is intelligent gathering. Attacks don't just happened, they are planned. Haruna (2020) quoted president Muhammadu Buhari who said 'this Boko Haram or whoever they are cannot come up to Maiduguri or its environs to attack without the local leadership knowing because traditionally the local leadership is in charge of the security in their own respective areas'.Ibrahim (2021) quoted the Kastina state governor, Aminu Masari who appealed to residents to be more vigilant and expose criminals among them. They are to ensure that only credible people are allowed to settle down in their communities. It is the responsibility of the community members to be more vigilant and careful with whom they want to accept into their communities as neighbours. These terrorists, bandits, kidnappers and other criminal are not invincible. Community participation can take the form of providing schools and security agencies timely information about attacks on schools. This means that the community members can provide the security agencies good intelligence that can protect the schools from threats and attacks.

2.   **Formation of community vigilante group**

Schools are located within the community and community that value education claimed ownership of the process as well as educational institution and invest their time, energy and hard earn money and other self-help initiative and project for the good of their children.Umar (2019) observed that community through the activities of Parents Teachers' Association can take over the responsibility for resourcing community guards to protect schools which will make teachers and students safe. This can be done in collaboration with the law enforcement agencies to thwart attacks. Armed guards could repel attacks and intimidate would-be-attackers. The

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community members should engage the government to empower the local vigilantes with sophisticated weapons to enable them provide security to schools.The vigilant should consist of community members who are ready to defend their place of origin.

3. **Public enlightenment on the activities of Boko haran and terrorists**

No individuals or organizations can solve any community problem without the active involvement of the community members especially the community leaders. The community leaders, especially Islamic scholars should embark on public enlightenment on the negative consequence of the activities of Boko Haran.The concerted public enlightenment should declare Boko Haran as a perversion of Islamic ideology. Haruna (2020) stated that you cannot kill an innocent person and you are shouting God is great. It is fraudulent and an act of stupidity.Community members must promote, protect and preserve educational infrastructure in their community. These community members include the civil society, opinion leaders, ward leaders, district heads, traditional rulers, religious leaders, political leaders, community development association, non-governmental organizations and individual who have passion for education of the young ones.

4. **Sensitization of community members on the danger of irresponsible parenting**

Vulnerable children are potential contributors to violence. Making provision for the material needs of members is one of the strategic roles of the family. There are economic needs associated with child bearing and child rearing. It is the responsibility of parents to provide food, shelter, clothes and other essentials for the family members. Umar (2019) quoted the Nasarawa State Governor, AbdullahiSule who said 'you cannot bring children to this world and dump them somewhere and expect somebody else to take care of them'. Government cannot performs the functions of the family and there is no religious teaching in the world that encourage such. Positive parenting are the beacon of light to a child's growth and development and should not be relegated to the background. The community members should be sensitized on the danger of poor parenting so that the youths are not brainwashed and conscripted into radicalism and other forms of nefarious activities.

5. **Establishment of safety and security committee at the community level**

This is another way by which communities can protect schools from attacks. The main purpose of this committee is to create a d strengthen safety awareness within the schools' communities. This committee will creates an opportunity for citizens' involvement in state security management and thereby raise higher standard of security awareness and effective security networking within the community. Reluctance by citizens to volunteer security information to law enforcement agencies will become a thing of the past as the security committee within the community will relate with the security agencies.This will leads to timely and promptness in the handling of security issue by the government that will protect schools from attacks.

6.   **Periodic patrols and inspections by law enforcement agencies**

Periodic patrols and inspections of schools by law enforcement agencies must be arranged with school community. Police men known to the community members should be kept near the schools. Communities must ensure round-the-clock surveillance system that can turn off kidnappers and terrorists. Effective partnership between the community and school administration is needed. This will help develop security mind-set on both staff, students and community members. Communities must take ownership of forest within their locality as this forest has becomes a breeding ground for criminals in the region. Boma (2021) observed that comprehensive threat assessment of schools in the entire region, with subsequent closures and relocation from 'ungoverned spaces' must be considered to avoid future attacks. We must strengthening our communities to withstand this pressure through the establishment of village security committees to help in community policing.

Conclusion

This study concludes that community participation in schools' security is a future fit strategy for solving the challenges of schools' attacks in Northern Nigeria. A deliberate strategy must be initiated by the government at all levels to bring community members into school's security to minimize attacks on schools in their respective communities. This is because security is everybody's business. The challenges of schools' attacks could be minimize if the government engage and empower community to protect schools in the region. This strategy will encourages communities around the schools to be involved in the security of schools for the general good of education. Therefore the vision of safe schools for the future must involve community in the management of schools' security. This study identified the followings as challenges of schools' attacks in Northern Nigeria. These challenges are; religious extremism, poverty and unemployment, lack of political will on the part of government, irresponsible parenting,and failure of intelligent gathering among others. The study identified the following ways in which community can participates in school security. These include sensitization and mobilization of community members on the important intelligent gathering, collaboration and partnership with security agencies, formation of community vigilante group and education of community members on the danger of the activities of kidnappers and terrorists. The study recommended among others that communities must ensure round-the-clock surveillance system that can turn off kidnappers and terrorists.

Suggestions

The outcome of this study necessitate the following suggestions.

1.   Terrorism and kidnapping are intelligence-driven. We must raise our national intelligence to fight this menace at community level.

2.   Communities must ensure round-the-clock surveillance system that can turn off kidnappers and terrorists.

3.   Community vigilante with modern weapon andsophisticated weaponsshouldbe established to guide the schools so as to contribute in restoring the security situation.

4. There should be a concerted communityenlightenment programmed that will declare 'BokoHaram' a perversion of religion and not an Islamic ideology.

5. The community should educate their members on the danger of irresponsible parenting as breeding children they cannot take care provide huge reservoir of recruits in to terrorists' activities.

6. The community leaders should prevail on the government at all levels in the region to develop political will to end the attacks on schools.

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