

Security Challenges and Sustainability of Gender Equality in Access to Quality Education in South-East Nigeria

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.701074>

Received: 14 September 2023; Revised: 30 September 2023; Accepted: 04 October 2023;
Published: 04 November 2023

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of security challenges on the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to ascertain forms, causes and consequences of security challenges on the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria. Five research questions and five corresponding hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance. This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised estimated 63, 935 respondents that comprised 22,576 male and female teachers and 41, 359 parents in the study area. Multi-stage random sampling technique was adopted and 759 respondents comprising 378 teachers and 381 parents were randomly selected. The instrument for data collection was a 46-item structured questionnaire on a 4-point modified Likert scale designed by the researchers with response options ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), to Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics involving mean and standard deviation, while hypotheses were tested at a .05 level of significance using independent sample t-test statistics. Results of the study revealed among others that human, perceived socio-political Exclusion, cultural and internal factors which resulted in agitation for self-rule through the instrumentality of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), constitute security challenges to sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-East Nigeria which affect sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education as it increases school dropout rate, and unfriendly learning environment. The study recommended among other things that, Federal and South-East state governments should use dialogue and strategic communication framework to curb security challenges that threaten quality education in the South-Eastern Nigeria and that constructive engagement of youths through Technical and vocational education, and the unconditional release of the IPOB leader could curb the security challenges in the area.

Keywords: Agitation, out-of-school children, Security challenges, Self-rule, and sit-at-home

INTRODUCTION

Education is the greatest asset a family and country can bequeath to its members and citizens respectively. It is the key that unlocks the door of opportunities by acquiring the right knowledge, attitude, and skill for useful living. Education is a weapon for combating illiteracy, ignorance, diseases, and poverty, a vehicle for attaining equality and a primary determinant of individual success. From the foregoing, it is evident that education is relevant to the socio-economic transformation of the individual and society. Thus, education offers equal opportunity to people to develop and improve their innate abilities as they strive to contribute

their quota to the overall development of society. Despite the valuable contributions of education, access to quality education irrespective of sex, age, tribe, creed, and location seems to be a mirage as the number of out-of-school children in Nigeria is increasing. In effect, there is a need to prioritize education to close gender gaps in enrollment in primary and secondary education in Nigeria.

Education is recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2013) as a sure channel for achieving gender equality as outlined in the Millennium Development Goal 3, and Sustainable Development Goal 4 which emphasize free and equal access to quality education by redressing social inequalities that impede equal access to education and women empowerment. Thus, education helps to eradicate gender disparity at all levels. Gender equality refers to equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women, men, girls and boys and equal power to shape their own lives and contribute to society (Gender Equality Policy and Strategy 2016-2020). Glass et al (2021) observe that substantial progress toward gender equality in education has been made in recent years, but these accomplishments seem fragile while McKeown (n.d.), avers that educating females, especially female children, is one of the most important challenges of this decade. The above assertions point to hindrances impeding the considerable progress made in gender equality in and through education. Whilst the Federal Government of Nigeria has initiated lofty policies and programme such as the Universal Basic Education aimed at increasing access to free, compulsory, and quality education from primary to junior secondary school level of education. However, the pervasive security challenges in Nigeria in recent time seems to constitute a potential threat to the already recorded success in gender equality in and through education in Nigeria.

Security challenges in Nigeria began in the aftermath of the civil war. The government purchased many arms, weapons, and equipment to fight the unfortunate civil war. After the war, some of these arms and weapons got into the hands of criminally minded individuals who used them for various wrong reasons such as robbery, ethnic, religious, communal disputes, and electoral violence. From thence, people began to purchase arms and weapons for armed robberies, kidnappings, oil bunkering, sea piracy, cultism, ritual killing, murders, banditry, insurgency, terrorism, secession, and agitations. This unfortunate widespread insecurity particularly in the north-east, north-west, north-central and south-east geopolitical zones of Nigeria has continued to undermine the effort of the government to make quality education affordable and accessible to all Nigerians irrespective of creed, religion, sex and location.

The South-East geo-political zone occupies a strategic position in the socio-economic, political, and educational development of Nigeria. It is the entrepreneurial and commercial hub of Nigeria. Suffice it to say that this geo-political zone has produced influential women who have made their marks in their chosen careers such as the late Professor Dora Akunyili, Dr. Obiageli Katryn Ezekwesili, Florence Nwanzuruahu Nkiru Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and Onyeka Onwenu to mention but just a few. It is regrettable to note that the outbreak of the Nigerian civil war was an omen of security challenges in the southeast geopolitical zone and Nigeria in general. Like the other geo-political zones, the south-east has security threats and challenges such as kidnapping, armed robbery, communal crisis, cultism herdsman-farmers clashes, proliferation of illegal arms and the violent secessionist agitation of Movement for the Actualization of the Survival of the Sovereign State of Biafra and the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra groups constitute security challenges that seem to hinder sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education.

The many years of perceived marginalization, inequality, injustice, and a discriminating social system that seems to politically exclude the south-east from becoming president of Nigeria after the civil war have created suspicion and resentment in the minds of the people. These perceived marginalization, repression, and injustice against the people of the south-east zone have toughened the people, forcing them to take their destiny into their own hands which has resulted in social tension, violence, and demand for an independent

state of Biafra led to the breakdown of law and order which is a threat to sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in Nigeria. Similarly, the prevailing state of security challenges in the South-East where citizens cannot go about their lawful businesses for fear of being killed or maimed by ‘unknown gunmen’ for disobeying the sit-at-home orders by the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) organisation. The sit-at-home orders seem to have crippled education in the zone as citizens are mandated to remain at home every Monday to press home their demand for the independent state of Biafra and any day Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of IPOB will be tried in court. This could impede the sustainability of gender equality to quality education in the south-east and Nigeria in general. It is in the light of the foregoing that this study seeks to examine the impact of security challenges on the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in South-East Nigeria

Several interrelated factors have been adduced as causes of insecurity in Nigeria by authors, researchers, and writers. However, some of these factors may vary slightly from one geopolitical zone to another. Anyaeji (2022) posits poor system of governance, weak judicial system, bribery and corruption, poverty, unemployment, culture of impunity, high rate of poverty and injustice in resource allocation as causes of insecurity in Anambra State which is one of the states in the study area. Manga (2019) identifies the nonchalant attitude of school management towards security issues, the lack of genuine school security plans, the poor performance of routine security duties by security guards across the schools, deficiencies in the construction of school plant, lack of permanent security guards in schools, and lack of regular security inspection of schools by the Ministry of Education as causes of insecurity in Nigerian schools. Ogheneakoke (2014) posits corruption, marginalization, social inequality, ethnicity (nepotism), poverty and greed, loss of value system, religious intolerance, foreign influence, bad leadership, youth unemployment, the porosity of national borders, falling standard of education, poor judicial system, cultism and cult activities, materialism, irregularities in the electoral process, lack of trust, human right abuses, injustice, and lack of transparency as causes of insecurity in Nigeria. Friedrich Ebert Foundation (n.d.) avers the emergence of the Eastern Security Network (ESN), an armed wing of IPOB (The Indigenous People of Biafra) in the Southeast region was stimulated by farmer-herder conflicts and kidnapping. The Agora Policy Report (2022) categorizes causes of insecurity into two, namely the drivers (environmental conditions) and manifestations (reactions of the people to environmental conditions). Specifically, the potential drivers of insecurity in Nigeria are ineffective and inadequate security architecture; ineffective and insufficient criminal justice system; proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, the prevalence of poverty and unemployment; the impact of climate change; agitations for resource control; easy access to illicit drugs; the presence of porous borders; multiplication of socio-political and economic grievances; poor land use policies; and failure to address structural/constitutional deficiencies.

Stressing the causes of insecurity in Nigeria in general and the southeast in particular, (Zubairu, 2020) noted that the menace of unemployment and poverty, exploitation of ethnicity and religious differences by elites, corruption, weak security apparatus, porous border, marginalisation and inequalities in the country, and bad governance and poor leadership are perceived causes of security challenges in Nigeria and South-East geopolitical zone. According to Udeoba and Eze (2021), there are external and internal sources of insecurity in Nigeria. The researchers attributed internal sources and causes of insecurity in Nigeria to lack of institutional capacity resulting in government failure. Consolidating on the above,

Security issues in Nigeria are usually politically related and sometimes linked to bad governance. For instance, Igbuzor (2011), Adagba (2012), Udeoba and Eze (2021) observe that the state of insecurity in Nigeria is greatly a function of government failure or can be linked to injustice that manifests in widespread unemployment and poverty among Nigerians and the failure of successive administrations to address these problems that compound inequality and unfairness, and inequitable distribution of wealth among ethnic nationalities. The seemingly unhealthy attention of the government to the glaring social issues breeds different forms of insecurity such as food insecurity, job insecurity, social insecurity, health insecurity,

religious insecurity, economic (financial) insecurity, and political insecurity (Okoreaffia & Nwokorobia, 2023; Udeoba & Eze, 2021). A nation or group of people bedeviled by such activities is bound to face a tougher social life and economic retrogression that could be endemic through decades.

Statement of the Problem

The Federal Republic of Nigeria recognizes education as a right of all Nigerians irrespective of sex, tribe, religion, social status, or implied disabilities and an instrument for creating equal opportunities for the progress of the individual and the society at large. Through education, poverty, ignorance, diseases, and inequality are systematically eliminated by increasing access to free and quality education. However, the high level of insecurity in the country, particularly, in South-Eastern Nigeria appears to be an albatross government's effort at increasing access to free and quality education. The secessionist movement of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra and the weekly sit-at-home-order of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) which shut down schools on Mondays and any other days of the week when there shall be hearing on Mazi Nnamdi Kanu trial in court seems to reverse the much-attained progress in enrollment rate. Similarly, wanton destruction of lives and property perpetrated by the activities of the "unknown gunmen" is another form of insecurity that seems to impede access to quality education and business activities in the zone. If the present state of security challenges in the South-East is allowed to linger beyond its present state, the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education might be a figment of imagination. Hence, this study seeks to examine the impact of security challenges on the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in South-East Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study and were examined.

1. What is the nature of security challenges confronting the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria?
2. What are the causes of security challenges affecting the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria?
3. To what extent does agitation for the independent state of Biafra constitutes security challenges threatening the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria?
4. What are the effects of security challenges on the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria?
5. What measures can be adopted to curb security challenges affecting the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria?

METHOD

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design which enabled the researchers to collect data from respondents in the study without imposing any treatment or condition on them. A survey is an investigation conducted over a large area to find out what problem exists as at the time of research in each area. The study covered the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria comprising Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States. The area of the study has 85 local government areas with over 20 million people. The geopolitical zone is characterised by large numbers of educational institutions ranging from public, private, and faith-based educational institutions across all levels of education. However, the zone is currently confronted by security challenges such as self-rule agitation by the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB), Eastern Security Network (ESN), wanton killing by unknown gunmen, and kidnapping. Since the area is relatively large and the security dynamics in the area, survey research design was considered appropriate as it allows collection

of data from randomly selected elements of the population.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all teachers and parents of learners in the public secondary schools in the five states of the South-East Nigeria. The target population was estimated to be 63, 935 respondents comprising 22, 576 male and female teachers and 41, 359 parents in the study area. The population of the study was restricted to teachers and parents because they appeared to be the most appropriate individuals that could respond meaningfully and objectively to the research instrument leading to impeccable solutions to the research problem.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

A representative size sample of 759 respondents comprising 378 teachers and 381 parents were randomly selected using multi-stage sampling technique. Multi-stage random sampling technique was adopted to select representative sample sizes that reflected the study population. At stage one, the study area was delineated into five states namely Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo from which the researchers randomly selected two (2) states of Anambra and Imo. At stage two, the researchers selected Anambra North and Anambra South Senatorial Districts from Anambra State, and Imo North (Okigwe zone) and Imo West (Orlu zone) Senatorial Districts from Imo State. Hence, four (4) senatorial districts were selected from the two selected states. At stage three, six (6) Local Government Areas, three (3) from Anambra North and three (3) from South Senatorial Districts of Anambra State were selected for the study. Also, six (6) and three (3) Local Government Areas from Imo West (Orlu zone) and Imo North (Okigwe zone) Senatorial Districts respectively were selected. Thus, 15 Local Government Areas were selected from the 32 Local Government Areas in the four (4) selected Senatorial Districts for the study. The differences in the number of local government areas selected was based on the number of local government areas housed by each local government area.

Forty-five (45) public secondary schools were selected from 45 randomly selected communities. A minimum of eight (8) to a maximum of 10 teachers were randomly selected from each school making it 378 teachers and a minimum of eight (8) to a maximum of 10 parents of SSI-II students were selected making 381 randomly selected parents for the study. The instrument for data collection was a 46-item structured questionnaire on a 4-point modified Likert scale designed by the researchers with response options ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), to Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was tagged "Security Challenges and Sustainability of Gender Equality on Quality Education Questionnaire (SCSGEQEQ)" with five clusters that reflected the five research questions. Two experts in the Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling; and the other in the Department of Educational Foundations, Federal College of Education (T) Asaba, Delta State validated the instrument for face, construct, and content validity. The instrument was trial tested (pilot studied) in two public secondary schools in Asaba, Delta State. A satisfactory reliability coefficient of 0.84, 0.79, .63, .74 and .84 was obtained for subscales (cluster) 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively and 0.77 was obtained for the full scale indicating that the questionnaire was reliable for data collection. The research instrument was administered by the researchers with the help of six research assistants through personal contact with respondents in their respective schools which lasted for one week. The administration exercise was done within school hours and the on-the-spot- method was done for teachers while students were allowed to take home questionnaires to their parents and returned the following day. Data collected were analyzed based on each of the research questions using Mean and Standard Deviation descriptive statistics. Mean and Standard Deviation scores were computed on each of the items addressing each of the research questions. Each of the 4-point modified Likert scale was assigned a numerical value or weight of SA = 4; A = 3; D = 2 and SD = 1. Thus, $4+3+2+1 = 10$; $\frac{10}{4} = 2.50$ mean response score decision rule was used.

Independent t-test statistic will be used to test the formulated null hypotheses at $\alpha = 0.05$ level of

significance. Analysis of data to test the formulated null hypotheses will be done using the computer programme software Statistical Package for Social Science version 16 (SPSS v16). The researchers will reject any tested null hypotheses if p-value is less than (<) alpha level 0.05. Similarly, the researchers will retain the tested null hypotheses if p-value is greater than (>) alpha level 0.05.

RESULTS

Research Question One: What are the forms of security challenges confronting sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Response Scores on Forms of Security Challenge Confronting Sustainability of Gender Equality in Access to Quality Education in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria

S/N	STATEMENT	Respondents	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Security challenges in the South-East is basically of internal origin	Teachers	2.95	1.07	Agree
		Parents	2.91	0.97	Agree
2	Security challenges in the South-East is of external origin/source	Teachers	1.77	1.00	Disagree
		Parents	2.84	0.95	Agree
3	Security challenges in the South-East is a combination of internal and external influence	Teachers	1.66	0.80	Disagree
		Parents	2.78	1.06	Agree
4	Security challenge in the South-East is largely socio-political (self-rule agitation) in nature	Teachers	3.28	0.86	Agree
		Parents	3.11	0.90	Agree
5	Land related communal clashes is a form of security challenge in the South-East	Teachers	2.10	1.07	Disagree
		Parents	2.31	1.13	Agree
6	Organised attacks on property and killing of persons by unknown gunmen is a form of insecurity in the South-East	Teachers	2.79	1.01	Agree
		Parents	2.93	0.97	Agree
7	Famers-herders clashes is the form of insecurity in the South-East	Teachers	1.77	0.88	Disagree
		Parents	1.98	1.02	Disagree
8	Banditry is a form of security challenges confronting the South-East	Teachers	2.09	1.01	Disagree
		Parents	2.06	1.08	Disagree
9	Abduction and kidnapping for ransom is a form of security challenges in the South-East	Teachers	3.14	0.97	Agree
		Parents	2.50	1.17	Agree
Grand Mean and Standard Deviation		Teachers	2.39	0.96	Agree
		Parents	2.60	1.03	Agree

Table 1 reveals the Mean and Standard Deviation response opinion scores of teachers and parents on forms of security challenges confronting sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria. Items 1, 4, 6 and 9 were rated above the threshold mean response score of 2.50 indicating agreement with the respective item statements. However, items 2, 3, 5, 7 and 8 were rated below the 2.50 Mean benchmark, suggesting teachers' disagreement with each of the item statements. The standard deviation response scores of parents ranged between 0.80 and 1.07 implying a close spread of opinions. On the other hand, parents rated items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 9 affirmatively but items 7 and 8 were rated below the mean decision benchmark 2.50. The standard deviation response scores of parents ranged between 0.90 and 1.17 implying a close spread of responses.

A grand mean and standard deviation response scores ($M = 2.39$; $SD = 0.96$) were obtained on teachers'

response opinions showing that internal influence, socio-political (self-rule agitation), vicious killing of persons, and abduction and kidnapping were forms of security challenges confronting sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria. Similarly, grand mean and standard deviation response scores ($M = 2.60$; $SD = 1.03$) were obtained on parents' responses indicating internal and external influence, self-rule agitation, land-related communal clashes, organised attacks on property and persons, and abduction for ransom are forms of security challenges in the South-East. Analysis of data showed that internal and external influence, self-rule agitation, land-related communal clashes, organised attacks on property and persons, and abduction for ransom are forms of security challenges in the South-East.

Research Question Two: What are the causes of security challenges affecting the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Response Scores on Causes of Security Challenges Affecting Sustainability of Gender Equality in Access to Quality Education in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria

S/N	STATEMENT	Respondents	Mean	SD	Remark
10	Widespread poverty is a root cause of insecurity in South-East states hindering the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education	Teachers	2.96	1.04	Agree
		Parents	2.71	1.02	Agree
11	High rate of unemployment for the teeming youths is responsible for insecurity of lives and property impeding the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-East states	Teachers	2.75	1.13	Agree
		Parents	2.96	0.94	Agree
12	Marginalization and inequality in the allocation of economic resources is a basis of insecurity that hampers the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-East states	Teachers	2.94	0.99	Agree
		Parents	3.01	1.03	Agree
13	Proliferation of firearms and light weapons is a potential cause of security challenges obstructing the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-East	Teachers	2.54	1.14	Agree
		Parents	2.86	1.02	Agree
14	Perceived ethnic domination, suspicion and discrimination against South-Easterners from becoming the President of Nigeria is the root cause of resentment and insecurity which impedes the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education	Teachers	2.74	1.14	Agree
		Parents	3.11	0.94	Agree
15	Electoral fraud which imposes leaders that are against the wishes of the masses breeds impunity and insecurity which tend to impede the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-East	Teachers	2.83	1.10	Agree
		Parents	2.48	1.13	Disagree
16	Proscription of IPOB, arrest and detention of the leader of IPOB is a root cause of insecurity which tend to hamper the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-East states	Teachers	2.62	1.11	Agree
		Parents	3.46	0.60	Agree

17	Bad governance is responsible for security challenge which hinders the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-East	Teachers	2.69	1.03	Agree
		Parents	2.94	1.24	Agree
18	The spill-over effect of security challenges in North-East (terrorism, insurgency-Boko Haram), North-West (banditry, ISWAP & cattle rustling), North-Central (Herders-Farmers Clash and kidnapping for ransom), South-South (Militancy and oil theft) is the cause of insecurity in the South-East states which tends to thwart sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education	Teachers	3.17	0.99	Agree
		Parents	2.49	1.15	Disagree
19	Agitation for self-determination in a neighbouring country of Cameroon and elsewhere causes insecurity hampering the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-East	Teachers	2.18	1.03	Disagree
		Parents	3.13	0.95	Agree
Grand Mean and Standard Deviation		Teachers	2.74	1.07	Agree
		Parents	2.92	1.00	Agree

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation response scores of teachers and parents on the causes of security challenges affecting the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in South-East Nigeria. Items 10-18 were rated above the decision-making mean response score of 2.50 indicating affirmation of the respective item statements by teachers. However, item 19 was rated below 2.50 mean decision rule score. The standard deviation scores ranged between 0.99 and 1.14 indicating a homogeneous spread of teachers' opinions on the item statements. On the other hand, parents rated items 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, and 19 higher than the mean decision rule of 2.50 signifying agreement with the respective item statements. Conversely, items 15 and 18 were rated below the 2.50 mean decision rule indicating disagreement with the item statements. The obtained standard deviation response scores of parents ranged between 0.94 and 1.24 showing a close spread of opinions.

A grand mean and standard deviation scores ($M = 2.74$; $SD = 1.07$) were obtained on teachers' responses indicating widespread poverty, high rate of unemployment, marginalization and inequality, proliferation of firearms and light weapons, perceived ethnic domination of the South-East, electoral fraud, proscription of IPOB, bad governance, and spillover effect of security challenges in other parts of Nigeria are causes of security challenges in the South-East. Similarly, grand mean and standard deviation scores ($M = 2.92$; $SD = 1.00$) were obtained on parents' responses signifying widespread poverty, high rate of unemployment, marginalization and inequality, the proliferation of firearms and light weapons, perceived ethnic domination of the South-East, proscription of IPOB, bad governance, and agitation for self-rule are the causes of security challenges in South-East Nigeria. Hence, analysis of data revealed the causes of security challenges in the South-East as the proscription of IPOB, the spillover effect of security challenges in other parts of Nigeria, agitation for self-rule, perceived ethnic domination of the South-East, marginalization and inequality, widespread poverty, high rate of unemployment, bad governance, the proliferation of firearms and light weapons, and electoral fraud.

Research question Three: To what extent does agitation for the independent state of Biafra constitutes security challenges threatening the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Response Scores on the Extent to Which Agitation for the Sovereign State of Biafra Constitutes Security Challenge to Sustainability of Gender Equality in Access to Quality Education in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria

S/N	STATEMENT	Respondents	Mean	SD	Remark
20	The creation of Ebube-Agu security outfit in the South-East States to witch-hunt political opponents constitutes security challenge to equal access to quality education of Nigeria.	Teachers	3.03	1.02	High Extent
		Parents	2.89	1.06	High Extent
21	The creation of Eastern Security Network (ESN) by IPOB in the agitation for the sovereign state of Biafra is a security challenge that hinders equal access to quality education in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria	Teachers	3.06	1.00	High Extent
		Parents	2.97	1.02	High Extent
22	Vicious killing of innocent citizens by unidentified gunmen in the agitation for the sovereign state of Biafra is a form of security challenge that impedes the sustainability of equal access to quality education in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria	Teachers	2.80	1.15	High Extent
		Parents	2.71	1.17	High Extent
23	Inability of security agencies to counter the sit-at-home order of IPOB inhibits the sustainability of equal access to quality education in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria	Teachers	2.77	1.00	High Extent
		Parents	2.55	1.14	High Extent
24	Kidnapping for ransom in the agitation for the sovereign state of Biafra is a form of insecurity that deters the sustainability of equal access to quality education in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria	Teachers	2.83	1.02	High Extent
		Parents	2.52	1.11	High Extent
25	The raiding of communities by unknown gunmen in the agitation for the sovereign state of Biafra is a security challenge that hinders the sustainability of equal access to quality education in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria	Teachers	2.79	1.12	High Extent
		Parents	2.58	1.06	High Extent
26	The vulnerability of school premises in the face of security challenges tends to hinder the sustainability of equal access to quality education in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria	Teachers	2.25	1.07	Low Extent
		Parents	2.24	1.10	Low Extent
27	Proliferation of firearms and light weapons due to self-rule agitation hampers the sustainability of equal access to quality education in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria	Teachers	2.78	0.97	High Extent
		Parents	2.80	1.05	High Extent
Grand Mean and Standard Deviation		Teachers	2.79	1.04	High Extent
		Parents	2.66	1.09	High Extent

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation response scores of teachers and parents on the extent to which agitation for self-rule constitutes security challenges to the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in South-East Nigeria. Teachers and parents unanimously rated items 20-25 and 27 higher than the decision rule mean score of 2.50 indicating affirmation of the item statements. Similarly,

teachers and parents jointly rated item 26 lower than the decision rule mean response score of 2.50 indicating disagreement with the item statement. The standard deviation response scores of teachers' opinions ranged from 0.97 to 1.15 and parents' standard deviation scores ranged from 0.99 to 1.11 implying similarity in the expression of opinions.

A grand mean and standard deviation scores ($M = 2.79$; $SD = 1.04$) were obtained on teachers' responses and ($M = 2.66$; $SD = 1.09$) on parents' responses signifying that agitation for the sovereign state of Biafra constitutes security challenges to the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in South-East Nigeria to a high extent. Thus, analysis of data showed that agitation for the sovereign state of Biafra, to a high extent, constitutes security challenges to the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in South-East Nigeria.

Research Question Four: What are the effects of security challenges on the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria?

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation Response Scores on Effects of Security Challenge on the Sustainability of Gender Equality in Access to Quality Education in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria

S/N	STATEMENT	Respondents	Mean	SD	Remark
28	Security challenges in the South-East tend to force teachers and learners into IDPs thereby hindering the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education.	Teachers	2.84	1.08	Agree
		Parents	2.40	1.09	Agree
29	Closure of schools due to security challenges in the South-East has increased school dropout rate	Teachers	2.90	1.03	Agree
		Parents	2.75	1.07	Agree
30	Security challenges in the South-East have made more female students withdraw from school in favour of early marriage.	Teachers	2.74	1.06	Agree
		Parents	2.71	1.06	Agree
31	Security challenges in the South-East have created disruption to school programme leading to the withdrawal of learners from schools	Teachers	2.90	1.02	Agree
		Parents	2.81	1.03	Agree
32	Security challenges in the South-East tend to make the learning environment unfriendly for the girl-child	Teachers	2.79	1.02	Agree
		Parents	2.86	1.07	Agree
33	The sit-at-home order tends to increase the rate of out-of-school youngsters in the South-East, especially the girl-child	Teachers	2.85	1.06	Agree
		Parents	2.81	1.12	Agree
34	Security challenges in the South-East tend to make more male students to drop out of school than their female counterpart	Teachers	2.84	1.12	Agree
		Parents	2.53	1.13	Agree
35	Security challenges in the South-East tends to make more male students to abandon schooling for agitations giving their female counterpart an edge over them	Teachers	2.84	1.07	Agree
		Parents	2.74	1.12	Agree
Grand Mean and Standard Deviation		Teachers	2.84	1.06	Agree
		Parents	2.70	1.09	Agree

Table 4 shows the mean and standard deviation response scores of teachers and parents on the effects of security challenges on the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in South-East Nigeria. Teachers rated all the items (28-35) greater than the decision rule mean score of 2.50 indicating affirmation of the item statements with standard deviation scores ranging between 1.02 and 1.12 showing homogeneity of responses. Similarly, parents affirmatively rated items 29-35 higher than the 2.50 decision rule mean score. However, parents rated item 28 lower than the decision rule mean response score of 2.50 indicating disagreement with the item statement with standard deviation response scores of parents' opinion

extending from 1.03 to 1.13 implying a close spread in the expression of opinions.

A grand mean and standard deviation scores ($M = 2.84$; $SD = 1.06$) were obtained on teachers' responses and ($M = 2.70$; $SD = 1.09$) on parents' responses indicating increased dropout rate, elongation of years of schooling, unfriendly learning environment, increased rate of out-of-school youngsters, forcing teachers and students into IDPs, higher male dropout rate, higher male students' abandonment of schooling for apprenticeship, and withdrawal of female students from schools to early marriage. Thus, analysis of data showed increased dropout rate, elongation of years of schooling, unfriendly learning environment, increased rate of out-of-school youngsters, forcing teachers and students into IDPs, higher male dropout rate, higher male students' abandonment of schooling for an apprenticeship, and withdrawal of female students from schools to early marriage as the effects of security challenges on the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in South-East Nigeria.

Research Question Five: What measures can be adopted to curb security challenges affecting the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria?

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation Response Scores on Measures for Curbing Security Challenges Affecting the Sustainability of Gender Equality in Access to Quality Education in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria

S/N	STATEMENT	Respondents	Mean	SD	Remark
36	Federal and state governments should implement school safety policies to safeguard the lives of students and teachers from all forms of insecurity	Teachers	2.75	0.99	Agree
		Parents	2.67	1.26	Agree
37	The federal and state governments should be committed to the promotion of safe school policy by deploying security agents to schools in urban and rural areas.	Teachers	2.75	0.99	Agree
		Parents	2.55	1.19	Agree
38	Equipping all security agencies in Nigeria with modern surveillance gadgets and sophisticated weapons to monitor and combat insecurity	Teachers	2.84	1.12	Agree
		Parents	2.83	1.05	Agree
39	Restructuring of the country to address observed imbalances in the distribution of resources between federal, state and local government areas	Teachers	2.93	1.01	Agree
		Parents	2.78	1.15	Agree
40	Constitutional amendment to accommodate rotational presidency to erase age-long perceived marginalization of South-Easterners from becoming president.	Teachers	3.10	0.98	Agree
		Parents	3.11	1.01	Agree
41	Creation of employment opportunities for the teeming unemployed populace by the government	Teachers	3.09	0.95	Agree
		Parents	2.90	1.01	Agree
42	Implementation of programmes and policies by governments to combat poverty to make kidnapping for ransom and other criminal activities unattractive	Teachers	2.90	0.99	Agree
		Parents	2.28	1.12	Disagree
43	The federal government should observe the rule of law by obeying all court orders	Teachers	3.10	1.04	Agree
		Parents	2.33	1.06	Disagree
44	Granting unconditional release to Nnamdi Kanu the leader of IPOB and amnesty to all elf-rule agitators in detention	Teachers	2.87	1.00	Agree
		Parents	2.75	1.14	Agree
45	Dialogue between the Federal Government of Nigeria, self-determination agitators and the people of the South-East on their grievances	Teachers	2.91	1.04	Agree
		Parents	2.86	1.10	Agree

46	Embarking on a comprehensive defense and security sector reform by reorganizing and increasing security sector manpower	Teachers	2.99	0.99	Agree
		Parents	2.76	1.01	Agree
Grand Mean and Standard Deviation		Teachers	2.93	1.01	Agree
		Parents	2.71	1.1	Agree

Table 5 revealed the mean and standard deviation response scores of teachers and parents on measures for curbing security challenges affecting the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in South-East Nigeria. Teachers rated all the items (36-46) that elicited responses on research question five affirmatively with standard deviation response scores ranging between 0.99 and 1.12 indicating a close spread of responses. Similarly, parents rated items 36-41, and 44-46 favourably with standard deviation response scores spanning between 1.01 and 1.26 implying close similarity of responses to items. However, items 42 and 43 were rated unfavourably with a mean response score lower than 2.50.

A grand mean and standard deviation scores ($M = 2.93$; $SD = 1.01$) were obtained on teachers' responses and ($M = 2.71$; $SD = 1.1$) on parents' responses indicating constitutional amendment to accommodate rotational presidency, observance of the rule of law, creation of employment opportunities, embarking on defense and security sector reform, addressing the imbalance in resource allocation through restructuring, dialogue between the federal government and IPOB leaders, poverty eradication through policy implementation, unconditional release of IPOB members and leaders in detention, equipping the security agencies, promotion of safe school policy, and implementation of school safety policy are measures for curbing security challenges in the South-East. Thus, analysis of data showed measures such as a constitutional amendment to accommodate rotational presidency, observance of the rule of law, creation of employment opportunities, embarking on defense and security sector reform, addressing the imbalance in resource allocation through restructuring, dialogue between the federal government and IPOB leaders, poverty eradication through policy implementation, unconditional release of IPOB members and leaders in detention, equipping the security agencies, promotion of safe school policy, and implementation of school safety policy for curbing security challenges on the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-East Nigeria.

Test of Hypotheses

H_{01} There is no significant difference in the mean response opinion of teachers and parents on the nature security challenges that hinder the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-East Nigeria.

Table 6: Independent Sample t-test on the Mean Response Opinion of Teachers and Parents on the Nature of Security Challenges Hindering the Sustainability of Gender Equality in Access to Quality Education in the South-East Nigeria.

Group	N	M	SD	t-cal.	Df	p-value	Decision
Teachers	378	21.55	7.87	3.093	757	.002	Rejected
Parents	381	23.42	8.75				

$\alpha = .05$

The result in Table 6 indicates that the calculated t-test value is 3.093 and a p-value of .002 with degree of

freedom (df) 757. Testing at alpha level 5% (.05), the p-value of .002 is less than the alpha level .05 ($p < .05$), therefore, the tested null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the mean response opinion of teachers and parents on the nature security challenges that hinder the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-East Nigeria in favour of parents.

There is no significant difference in the mean response opinion of teachers and parents on the causes of security challenges that impede the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria.

Table 7: Independent Sample t-test on the Mean Response Opinion of Teachers and Parents on the Causes of Security Challenges Impeding the Sustainability of Gender Equality in Access to Quality Education in the South-East Nigeria.

Group	N	M	SD	t-cal.	Df	p-value	Decision
Teachers	378	27.43	10.30	2.365	757	.018	Rejected
Parents	381	29.13	9.52				

$\alpha = .05$

The result in Table 7 indicates that the calculated t-test value is 2.365 and a p-value of .018 with degree of freedom (df) 757. Testing at alpha level 5% (.05), the p-value of .018 is less than the alpha level .05 ($p < .05$), therefore, the tested null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the mean response opinion of teachers and parents on the causes of security challenges that impede the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria in favour of parents.

There is no significant difference in the mean response opinion of teachers and parents on the effects of security challenges on the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria.

Table 8: Independent Sample t-test on the Mean Response Opinion of Teachers and Parents on the Effects of Security Challenges on the Sustainability of Gender Equality in Access to Quality Education in the South-East Nigeria.

Group	N	M	SD	t-cal.	Df	p-value	Decision
Teachers	378	22.26	7.99	1.651	757	.099	Retained
Parents	381	21.28	8.46				

$\alpha = .05$

The result in Table 8 indicates that the calculated t-test value is 1.651 and a p-value of .099 with degree of freedom (df) 757. Testing at alpha level 5% (.05), the p-value of .099 is greater than the alpha level .05 ($p < .05$), therefore, the tested null hypothesis is retained. Hence, there is no significant difference in the mean response opinion of teachers and parents on the effects of security challenges on the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria.

There is no significant difference in the mean response opinion of teachers and parents on the extent to which killing by unknown gunmen constitutes security challenges to the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria.

Table 9: Independent Sample t-test on the Mean Response Opinion of Teachers and Parents on the Extent to which Killing by Unknown Gunmen Constitutes Security Challenges to the Sustainability of Gender Equality in Access to Quality Education in the South-East Nigeria.

Group	N	M	SD	t-cal.	Df	p-value	Decision
Teachers	378	22.79	8.32	1.784	757	.075	Retained
Parents	381	21.61	8.46				

$\alpha = .05$

The result in Table 9 indicates that the calculated t-test value is 1.784 and a p-value of .075 with degree of freedom (df) 757. Testing at alpha level 5% (.05), the p-value of .075 is greater than the alpha level .05 ($p < .05$), therefore, the tested null hypothesis is retained. Hence, there is no significant difference in the mean response opinion of teachers and parents on the extent to which killing by unknown gunmen constitutes security challenges to the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria.

There is no significant difference in the mean response opinion of teachers and parents on measures for curbing security challenges affecting the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria.

Table 10: Independent Sample t-test on the Mean Response Opinion of Teachers and Parents on Measures for Curbing Security Challenges to the Sustainability of Gender Equality in Access to Quality Education in the South-East Nigeria.

Group	N	M	SD	t-cal.	Df	p-value	Decision
Teachers	378	32.22	10.73	2.946	757	.003	Rejected
Parents	381	29.83	11.65				

$\alpha = .05$

The result in Table 10 indicates that the calculated t-test value is 2.946 and a p-value of .003 with degree of freedom (df) 757. Testing at alpha level 5% (.05), the p-value of .003 is less than the alpha level .05 ($p < .05$), therefore, the tested null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the mean response opinion of teachers and parents on measures for curbing security challenges affecting the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria in favour of teachers.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the study on research question one revealed the forms of security challenges in the South-East are human, socio-political, cultural, and internal in forms and dimensions. This is consistent with Udeoba and Eze (2021) position of economic and social-political forms of insecurity in South-East Nigeria. Hence, security challenges in South-East Nigeria are acute human form impeding the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria. This agrees with the findings of Osaat and Peter (2021) classification of forms of insecurity in Nigeria into religious, political, and cultural dimensions.

The finding of the study on research question two showed causes of security challenges in the South-East as proscription of IPOB, spillover effect of security challenges in other parts of Nigeria, agitation for self-rule,

perceived ethnic domination of the South-East, marginalization and inequality, widespread poverty, high rate of unemployment, bad governance, proliferation of firearms and light weapons, and electoral fraud. This is related to Nwagboso (2012) who reported that security challenges in Nigeria are traceable to bad governance manifesting in as poverty, unemployment and inequitable distribution of wealth among ethnic nationalities which have led to anger, agitation and violent crimes against the Nigerian state. This is also consistent with Adeleke (2013); Udeoba and Eze (2021); Anyaeji (2022) who reported causes of security in Nigeria to power shift from the northern hegemony to a minority geo-political zone of South-south.

The result of the study on research question three revealed that agitation for the sovereign state of Biafra, to a high extent, constitutes security challenges to sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-East Nigeria. This is in line with Ewetan and Urhie (2014) who reported that insecurity has been on the increase, which have posed serious threat to lives and properties; that the menace had adversely affected business activities and discouraged local and foreign investors; that insecurity has undoubtedly threatened the corporate existence of the country as one and indivisible political entity.

The finding of the study on research question four showed negative effects of security challenges on sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-East Nigeria as increased dropout rate, elongation of years of schooling, unfriendly learning environment, increased rate of out-of-school youngsters, forcing teachers and students into IDPs, higher male dropout rate, higher male students' abandonment of schooling for apprenticeship, and withdrawal of female students from schools to early marriage. This is related to Nweke (2022) whose study reported a high extent of negative effects of insecurity on the management of secondary education in Ayamelum Local Government Area of Anambra State. Similarly, Achumba et al. (2013) reported that insecurity has led to loss of lives and property and a general atmosphere of fear and social tension in the country.

The result of the study on research question five revealed measures for curbing security challenges hindering sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-East Nigeria as constitutional amendment to accommodate rotational presidency, observance of rule of law, creation of employment opportunities, embarking on defense and security sector reform, addressing imbalance in resource allocation through restructuring, dialogue between federal government and IPOB leaders, poverty eradication through policy implementation, unconditional release of IPOB members and leaders in detention, equipping the security agencies, promotion of safe school policy, and implementation of school safety policy. This is consistent with Nwagboso (2012); Anyaeji, (2022); Udeoba and Eze (2021) who recommended the formulation and effective implementation of policies and programmes that can address the root causes of insecurity in Nigeria such as unemployment, poverty, environmental degradation, injustice among others.

The result of the study on hypothesis one revealed a significant difference in the mean response opinion of teachers and parents on the nature security challenges that hinder the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-East Nigeria in favour of parents. Teachers and parents expressed divergent views on the form of security challenges hindering the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-East Nigeria.

The finding of the study on hypothesis two showed a significant difference in the mean response opinion of teachers and parents on the causes of security challenges that impede the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria in favour of parents. This finding of the study is due to differences in the response opinions of teachers and parents on spillover effect of security challenges in various parts of Nigeria, and influence of agitation for self-rule in neighbouring Cameroon and elsewhere as causes of security challenges that impede the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria.

The result of the study on hypothesis three revealed no significant difference in the mean response opinion of teachers and parents on the effects of security challenges on the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria. This is in line with Ojukwu (2017) who revealed that insecurity of school environment significantly affects the academic performance of secondary school students while students' gangsterism, smoking of Indian hemp, abusing other hard drugs, cult and related violent activities were some of the factors that constituted insecurity of the school environment which eventually cause boys to leave school and join trading while leading girls to drop out and settle for marriage.

The finding of the study on hypothesis four showed no significant difference in the mean response opinion of teachers and parents on the extent to which killing by unknown gunmen constitutes security challenges to the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria. This is consistent with Achumba et al. (2013) who reported a significant loss of lives and property and a general atmosphere of fear and social tension due to insecurity in the country and South-East by extension.

The result of the study on hypothesis five revealed a significant difference in the mean response opinion of teachers and parents on measures for curbing security challenges affecting the sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria in favour of teachers. This is related to Alonge and Awulor-Hephzibah (2019) who reported a significant difference in the security management skills possessed by school administrators from modern and public secondary schools, between male and female school administrators.

CONCLUSION

Security challenges have constituted threat to fragile success made in combating high rate of out-of-school, attrition, low enrollment and ensuring gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states and in Nigeria in general. It is concluded that security challenges have negative effects on sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria. The weekly sit-at-home order of IPOB and ruthless killing by unknown gunmen, Eastern Security Network and Ebube-Agu have led to closure or shutdown of schools every Mondays will consequently lead to increased dropout and withdrawal from schools and making school environment unsafe and unfriendly for effective learning activities. If this is left unchecked, it will lead to high rate of illiteracy in the South-East and imbalance in gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, it was recommended that:

1. Federal and South-East state governments should employ oft-approach to conflict resolution such as dialogue and strategic communication framework to curb all forms of security challenges to sustainability of gender equality in access to quality education in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria.
2. Federal and South-East state governments should employ kinetic and non-kinetic approach such embracing national trauma healing framework, strengthening of judicial and legislative response; strengthening of border security, constructive engagement of unemployed and unskilled youths through education and vocational training, undertake strategic defence and security sector reform, and control of arms and light weapons.
3. Federal government should grant unconditional release and grant amnesty to IPOB members facing trials, facilitate constitutional amendment to accommodate rotational presidency to erase age-long perceived marginalization of South-Easterners from becoming president and restructure the country to address observed imbalances in the distribution of national wealth.
4. Federal and South-East state governments should deploy security agencies to schools to enhance school safety policy that ensures protection of lives of students and teachers.

5. Federal and South-East state governments should adopt multidimensional measures for curbing security challenges through suspension of the use of security agencies to repress self-rule agitators, ensure unconditional release of pro-IPOB and members of Eastern Security Network (ESN), engage in dialogue with IPOB members, constitutional reforms to address injustice, marginalisation and inequality in the political equation of the country, building sustainable peace in the South-East through elimination of age-long sentiments of marginalisation and non-implementation of the agreed 3Rs (Reintegration, Reconstruction and Reconciliation), fostering good governance and sustainable development, and development of strategic media initiatives.

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