

# Insecurity and Education: Implications for the Achievement of Better Education Service Delivery for All (Besda) in Kebbi State

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## ABSTRACT

Insecurity in Nigeria is not only about attacks on religious centres, markets, and security posts. It is also about attacks on schools, which makes them insecure leading to low school enrolment, attendance and completion rates while increasing the number of out-of-school children, and at the same time placing many areas in Nigeria in an educationally disadvantaged position, with greater risks of missing out on education, perpetuating inequalities and marginalisation. This paper therefore assessed the impact of insecurity on Nigeria's education system and its implications for the realisation of Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) in Kebbi State. The paper identified unsafe schools, abduction, sexual harassment, and killing of students, teachers and school administrators as various effects of insecurity that have led to school closures not only in Kebbi State but across the North West region. It has also considered the consequences of insecurity including school drop-outs, low school enrolment, attendance, completion rates, and destruction of school facilities, learning loss, and fear among students. The paper therefore suggests that the government and other education stakeholders should take comprehensive security strategies such as the safe school initiative to curb the issue of insecurity in schools in Kebbi State.

**Key Words:** Insecurity, Primary Education, BESDA, Out of School Children, Safe School Initiative

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the state of education in Nigeria has become a cause for concern. This is happening at a time when the country requires adequate manpower to pilot its national development. Even before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) in 2019, the education system in Nigeria had lost its way. Nigeria's education is faced with challenges that have contributed to keeping more than 15 million children (aged between 6 and 18 years) out of school (Dominic *et al.*, 2021).

Although the current system of education in Nigeria follows a rigid path, forcing every child to go to school from primary to at least junior secondary education level before they can pursue their chosen careers, however, there is no doubt that in most parts of the country, schooling comes with its fair share of challenges such as dilapidated infrastructure, inadequate resources, and less motivated teachers among others (Hayab *et al.*, 2023). These challenges have contributed to the rising number of out-of-school children in Nigeria. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF Nigeria) report in 2023 has revealed that there are more than 20 million children who are out of school. The figures in Nigeria have oscillated between 10.5

million and around 15 million for more than a decade, with the situation growing worse due to the degenerated security situation in the country. Nigeria now has about 20 million out-of-school children (UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2022). These children are at risk of never returning to school. A considerable number of these children are in the northwest and northeast of Nigeria, where the activities of gunmen have resulted in a serious humanitarian crisis.

Insecurity is associated with feelings of vulnerability, uncertainty, danger and or threat to life. Mogboh (2022) regarded insecurity as a state of being subjected to fear, threat, danger, molestation, intimidation, and harassment of individuals. Over the past decade, Nigeria experienced different forms of gun violence including terrorism, kidnapping, insurgency, banditry, and cattle rustling among others. Security experts and researchers have revealed that the threats from insecurities are manifold (Zubairu, 2020). Among the major challenges imposed by insecurity in Nigeria are the destruction of lives, displacement of settlement, traumatic disorder, and destruction of infrastructures, which has significantly caused a lack of access to basic social services delivery, including education and health thereby depriving children of their access to quality education, good health services, protection, and many other critical services (Ogunode *et al.*, 2021, Ali *et al.*, 2023). This was exacerbated in recent times by attacks on learning institutions and the abduction of students and teachers among others.

Although Nigeria has agreed to the principles of the Safe Schools initiative, however, schools, learners and teachers are not adequately protected especially in gun conflict areas (UNICEF, 2021). Between December 2020 to December 2022, a total of over 11,636 schools have been closed due to attacks, abductions and other security issues (UNICEF Nigeria, 2022). Ogunode and Ahaotu (2021) revealed that the purpose of the closure of schools by the state governments in Northern Nigeria is a strategy to safeguard students, teachers, and administrators and prevent further attacks on other educational facilities whenever schools come under attack by bandits or insurgents. Hence, school re-opening became increasingly uncertain in some areas.

The continuous disruption to education by frequent school attacks has caused millions of children to significantly miss out on learning skills they would have acquired if they had been in the classroom (Ogunode & Kolo, 2021). Disruptions to education affect the northeast and northwest regions of Nigeria in greater proportions than other regions (Umar, 2021, Ali *et al.*, 2023). It has placed children in these areas in an educationally disadvantaged position, with greater risks of missing out on education, perpetuating inequalities and marginalisation in the affected regions.

Insecurity is a threat to the development of education in the north-west region of Nigeria. Educational stakeholders, including students, teachers and the government are being frustrated by the state of insecurity in the region, leading to educational decay (Ngwoke & Akabike, 2022). For instance, it is on record that no fewer than 800 primary, secondary and tertiary institution students have been kidnapped in coordinated attacks by terrorists and bandits in the last two years in this region alone (Adams *et al.*, 2021; Umar, 2021). Although these incessant attacks and abductions did not begin recently, they have become more frequent in recent times than ever before. The continuous attacks on the educational institutions have adverse effects on the school administrators, teachers and students' learning (Ogunode & Kolo, 2021; Hayab *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, insecurity has raised tension which caused emotional, psychological, and mental imbalance, especially among the abducted school children and staff (Adamu, 2019). The experience of bandits' attacks instils fear in parents, teachers, students, and government thereby making it difficult for the reopening of the affected schools. The fear of abduction, brutalization, and dehumanisation of kidnapped student victims has made parents, who are already sceptical of sending their children to school further lock down their children to avoid the risk of raising millions of naira in ransom or losing any of their children (Umar, 2021). This has disrupted education at all levels.

Specifically, the basic education programme happened to be the most affected by the insecurity problem in north-west Nigeria. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme is a nine-year basic educational

programme, designed to provide compulsory, free, qualitative and equitable access to basic education for every Nigerian child of school age with the hope to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance, and poverty as well as stimulate and accelerate national development, political consciousness and national integration (Federal Republic of Nigeria: FRN, 2013). Unfortunately, the high rate of insecurity in the region has led to low enrolment, disruption of academic programmes, and learning losses among others. It has also hampered the development of basic education in the northwest region of Nigeria. Hence, the region is ranked second in the number of out-of-school children after the northeast (Emeka & Dominic, 2021).

The hope of bringing back to school most of these out-of-school children can be achieved only through serious interventions with assurance of security for safe schools that can guarantee effective teaching and learning (Manga, 2019). Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) is a five-year multi-million-dollar education development intervention from the World Bank that started operation in 2018. The primary purpose is to reduce the number of out-of-school children, which is in line with the objective of Universal Basic Education programme in Nigeria (Sarkinfa, 2023). The other program development objectives is to increase equitable access to education and improve literacy for out-of-school children in focus States, and strengthen accountability for results, in basic education (World Bank, 2020). At the launching of the intervention, about 17 states with the highest number of out-of-school children in the country were enrolled on the programme (NAN, 2018). The states include the entire seven (7) North West states: Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara. Other states include Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe, Niger, Ebonyi, Rivers, and Oyo. According to the national coordinator for the BESDA programme Prof Tahir Gidado, the North West states have more than thirty per cent (30%) of their school-age children out of school. The alarming rate of out-of-school children in this region alone has remained a worrisome phenomenon in the country's education system that must be addressed.

Despite accessing its funds, most North West states still top the list of states with the highest number of out-of-school children in Nigeria. Currently, there are 13.5 million school-age children who are out of school (PREMIUM TIMES, September 1<sup>st</sup> 2022). The recent statistics of the increased number of out-of-school children in Nigeria by UNESCO have raised fresh concerns on the state of basic education and the role of governments in meeting the target of bringing the out-of-school children back to school by the end of the programme duration. This can be noticed in the UNICEF Nigeria report (2022), which indicated that Kebbi and eleven other states housed most of Nigeria's out-of-school children (about 8.739 million). The statistics revealed that Bauchi State has the most out-of-school children with (1, 239,759), Zamfara (883,952), Kebbi (877,677); Katsina (873,633); Kano (837,479), Jigawa (784,391), Kaduna (652,990) and Gombe (567,852). Followed closely are Adamawa (489,855), Niger (478,412), Oyo (463,280), and Sokoto (462,164). Others include Yobe (405,100), Benue (383,022), Taraba (338,975), Borno (266,478), Osun (260,522); Plateau (258,256); Lagos (229,264), Nasarawa (204,771) and Rivers (196,584). States with the lowest number of out-of-school children are Edo (76,446), Abia (86,124), Bayelsa (86,124), Anambra (92,332), Ekiti (99,778), Ondo (113,746) and Enugu (117,091). Others are FCT (121,587), Imo (125,414), Cross River (140,944), Kwara (141,325), Ebonyi (151,000) and Ogun (158,797).

In support of the above statistics the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in a recent survey conducted in Kebbi state released breath-taking statistics of 814,915 out-of-school children. It was this shocking revelation that drew the attention of the minister of state for education to launch the national flag-off campaign for out-of-school children in January 2022 at the state capital, Birnin Kebbi. Although, the government of Kebbi State, through a strategic document launched in 2018, had expressed readiness to recover 70 per cent of children (about 500,915, including Almajiri, Girl-Child and Nomadic Children) who either have not attended or had dropped out of school; however, there is still a long way to go going by these reports (The Blue Print Newspaper, March 27<sup>th</sup> 2022).

Even though the state government has made concerted efforts to improve access to quality education; it is unfortunate to point out that the fear of insecurity, kidnapping, school closure, poverty, ill-health, death of

parents, hunger and lack of fees are some of the factors that have continued to cause increase in number of out-of-school children (Manga, 2019). The most recent of these evil acts was the abduction of 102 pupils from federal Government College Birnin-Yauri, and hosts of other schools in Danko-Wasagu and Sakaba local government areas, whose students and teachers deserted them for safety due to proximity to the bandits' occupied territories (Lawal, & Babalola, 2022). When schools are attacked, children and parents often see them as places of danger, making parents afraid to send their wards to school (Manga, 2019). Thus, this has directly impacted the BESDA programme by slowing down the plan of bringing back to school the out-of-school children, while there is also a gradual decline in interest in schooling (education).

### **Objective of the Study**

This study is directed toward assessing the impact of insecurity on the achievement of BESDA in Kebbi State, Nigeria.

## **STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The primary objective of the BESDA education intervention programme was to bring back to school out of school children. After 4-5 years of its launching, it appeared that the aim of this World Bank education intervention had not fully been achieved. Survey reports of both UNICEF and NBS released recently have confirmed that there are millions of school-age children in Nigeria who are yet to be enrolled into the school system. The report said Nigeria holds an unenviable position of being the country with the largest population of out-of-school children of primary school age: 6.4 million in 2000; 7.5 million in 2010; 9.6 million in 2020 and 13.5 million in 2021.

The situation is not different in Kebbi state. While, on one side, there are a lot of school-age children including the Almajiri, the Girl-child and the young adults who are yet to be enrolled into the school system; on the other side, the school children who have left school due to circumstances of insecurity. Their communities have been displaced and they are now spread to nearby towns that are relatively secure. To these children, it is a learning loss or the end of schooling. Hence, there is a need to assess the impact of insecurity on the achievement of BESDA in Kebbi State.

## **INSECURITY AND NIGERIA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM**

Insecurity is simply the absence of peace, safety, happiness and protection of the lives and properties of individuals. Mogboh (2022) has addressed it as a situation that subjects an individual to threat, fear, danger, harassment, or intimidation which affects his/her emotional, psychological and physical well-being. It is associated with feelings of vulnerability, uncertainty, danger and or threat to lives and properties.

In developing nations like Nigeria, there is insecurity that comes with ignorance, hunger, poverty, and other forms of economic hardship. All of these combined can fuel kidnapping, cattle rustling, bandits, and insurgency in the country. This resulted in a situation of constant panic (Jacob *et al.*, 2021). Insecurity and its challenges are predominantly experienced in northern Nigeria, which is already a less educationally developed region than the other regions in the country (Umar, 2021; Sarkinfada, 2023).

Educational institutions in Nigeria have in recent times become under attack by the bandits and terrorists. Institutions of basic, secondary and higher education were not an exception. Students, teachers and school administrators were at one school or the other being disturbed, abducted at gunpoint, and or innocently murdered (Jacob *et al.*, 2021). In the North East region, for instance, facilities, teachers and students have been exposed to outright suicide bombing which usually claimed lives and destroyed property (Zubairu, 2020). Millions of school children in Nigeria are victims of conflicts that resulted in the disruption of not



only their school attendance but also academic loss (Umar, 2021).

There were cases of kidnapping and murder in schools, which included the killing of 40 students of Federal Polytechnic, Mubi in Adamawa State by Boko-Haram terrorist in 2012, the kidnaping and gang raping of a female student of Abia State University by persons suspected to be cultists in 2013, the abduction of 276 schoolgirls from Government Secondary School, Chibok by Boko-Harram terrorists in Borno State in 2014; 3 students of Babington Macaulay Junior Seminary, Ikorodu were abducted by unknown gunmen in March, 2016; the suicide bombing attack of University of Maiduguri that claimed the lives of three persons including a professor in 2017, the abduction of 110 school girls from Government Girls Science and Technical College, Dapchi, Yobe State by Boko-Harram terrorist in 2018; the kidnapping and killing of three students of the University of Port Harcourt by cultists in 2020; the abduction of 344 students by bandits from Kankara, Katsina State; the abduction of 276 students by bandits from Jangebe, Zamfara State; the abduction of 140 students by bandits from Chikun in Kaduna State, abduction of 102 students by bandits from Federal government College, Yauri, Kebbi State and the kidnapping of 175 children from Islamic school at Tagina, Niger state (Nwosu *et al.*, 2019; BBC, 2021; Mamman, 2021; Umar, 2021; Jacob *et al.*, 2021; UNICEF, 2022; Mogboh, 2022; Ali *et al.*, 2023). The recent kidnapping of a significant number of students of the Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State, in the early hours of Friday 22nd September 2023 (Punch Newspaper, 22nd September 2023). There are many other attacks on educations that were not reported (Mogboh, 2022).

Statistics have it that a total of 11,536 schools were closed for specific periods in 2020, with 5,330,631 students, whose schooling was disrupted and learning severely impacted. The different attacks on schools have landed the Nigerian education system in a deep crisis of general low school enrolment, attendance, and completion rates arising from consistent school closures leading to an increase in the number of out-of-school children (Akintunde *et al.*, 2016).

## FORMS OF INSECURITY IN NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Insecurity in the Nigerian education system is not only about kidnapping and killing. Rather, it is also about the risk and disruption of education that comes with it. Since two decades ago, Nigeria's education system has experienced different forms of insecurity prevalent in schools, which include physical attacks, abduction and rape of students, teachers and or administrators among others (Manga, 2019). Research findings such as that of Jacob *et al.*, (2021), Umar (2021), Anyaeji (2022), and Mogboh (2022) have identified the following forms of insecurity in the Nigerian school system.

**Cultism:** This is one of the forms of security challenges facing educational institutions in Nigeria. Umar (2021) associates cultism with a ritual practice by a group of students whose membership is by initiation. Most of their operations are done in secret. Cultism among Nigerian students has caused lots of academic disruptions (Mogboh, 2022). It has caused rape, kidnapping and killing of students and teachers in schools across the country. For instance, in 2013 a student of Abia state university was kidnapped and ganged raped by suspected cultists and three students of the University of Port Harcourt were kidnapped and killed by cultists in 2020 (Umar, 2021, Ugwuoke *et al.*, 2023). Hence, cultism is a serious threat to both students and teachers in some parts of Nigeria.

**Kidnapping:** Kidnapping is among the biggest organized crime in Nigeria. Kidnapping is the unlawful abduction of a person against his/her will and often involves holding him/her for ransom. In Nigeria, a lot of students were abducted from schools at gunpoint by bandits and or terrorists of the Boko-Haram sect (Ohaeri & Okoro, 2021; Lawan & Umar, 2022). According to the UNICEF Nigeria report (2021), a total of 11,536 schools were closed for specific periods in the year under review for fear of attacks and kidnapping by different armed groups. This has resulted in the disruption of schooling of about 5,330,631 students

(Ohaeri & Okoro, 2021). In support of these statistics, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021 that more than 600 students were abducted from schools in north-western Nigeria from 2020 to 2021. Therefore, there is no doubt that the abduction of school children has significantly contributed to an increased number of out-of-school children in Nigeria.

**Sexual Harassments:** Sexual harassment in school is on the increase in Nigeria. Sexual harassment includes all unwanted sexual behaviours that are intimidating or humiliating and interfere with the rights of a person. Sexual harassing behaviour in school can affect student's education opportunities ranging from written or spoken words, and gestures to unwelcomed sexual advances or physical contact (Fareo, 2015). Other behaviours include requests for sexual favour by staff, another student, or any other person. Both female and male students can be victims of sexual harassment (Umar, 2021). Whenever students experience sexual harassment in school, they will see school as a place of danger, making them afraid to go to school. This will affect their mental health as they struggle to recover from the shock of the incident.

**Students/Community Crisis:** This is also another identified conflict that is resulting in situations of insecurity in school. Students/Community conflict/crisis is a form of conflict between students, mostly from higher institutions and their host communities. It involves the use of physical force against people in the community, students, staff or schools which may destroy lives and properties (Shola, 2015). A good example of this form of crisis was the violent conflict between students of Federal Polytechnic Offa and the Offa community in Kwara State. In most scenarios, this always results in the closure of the affected school and the vulnerable students may never return to that school for fear of retaliation.

**Students' Riot:** This is another form of student unrest, which often leads to disruption of academic activities for some time as the affected school is usually shut down. More recent of this crisis, is the 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2021 Idoho secondary school students' riot in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government area of Edo state (Vanguard Newspaper of 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021). The government usually closes schools as a strategy to curtail the situation of insecurity, assess the level of destruction, effect repairs and put modalities in place to avoid reoccurrence in future. Some students may not return to school again for fear of intimidation and punishment.

### **Consequences of Insecurity on the Education System in Nigeria**

Some of the consequences of insecurity in the education system in Nigeria include the following:

**School Drop-Out/Increased Out-of-School Children:** There is an increasing rate of school dropout in Nigeria (Mogboh, 2022). School drop-out is a situation where a student hangs up schooling because he/she is unable to continue with the school programme. The increase in school drop-outs has increased the number of out-of-school children, particularly in the northern region of Nigeria (Zubairu, 2020; Okanezi & Obitor, 2023). Many factors have resulted in this problem. Prominent among them are the activities of bandits, Boko-Haram terrorists and other unknown gunmen whose continuous attacks and adoptions have raised fear and anxiety among students and parents, thereby raising the level of out-of-school children (Lawan & Umar, 2022, Ali *et al.*, 2023).

**Fear among Students and Staff:** The uncertainty of security that clouds the school environment, especially in northern Nigeria has continued to put fear in the minds of teachers, school administrators, students and their parents (Manga, 2019). The psychological effects that arise from the shock of attacks will continue to keep students away from schools. Most students and teachers who have survived an attack in their school would not like to go back to that school, especially when they remember the number of schoolmates, friends, support staff and teachers who were killed during attacks (Ossai, 2022; Mogboh, 2022). UNICEF report of 2021 on the state of education in Nigeria has revealed that whenever schools are attacked, it rekindles fear and panic in students and parents, who often see schools as places of danger. Therefore, fear

is affecting both school attendance and enrolment.

**Low School Enrolment:** Low school enrolment is one of the major consequences of insecurity in the Nigerian education system. Low school enrolment is high in crisis areas of Nigeria. The number of school enrolments is on the decline as security remains a challenge to schools in Nigeria (Mogboh, 2022). Although, the BESDA programme aims to increase school enrolment, however, this is almost not fully achievable at the moment because insecurity remains a challenge to Nigeria's education system (Ossai, 2022, Ugwuoke *et al.* 2023).

**Destruction of School Facilities:** Before the insurgency extended to schools, most schools in Nigeria were faced with the problem of infrastructural decay. The insecurity situation in Nigeria has caused further destruction of the available infrastructure (Lawan & Umar, 2022; Ali *et al.*, 2023). In Borno state, for instance, schools were used as hide-outs of the Boko-Haram terrorists which became under shelling by both the Nigerian military and the terrorists themselves in defence of their captured territory. Other schools in the towns were turned into Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps (Bukar *et al.*, 2020). Adeleke (2013) and Okanezi and Obitor (2023) emphatically points out that insecurity in Nigeria has led to the destruction of lives, properties and equipment, relocation and closing down of schools and other economic activities.

## CATEGORIES OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL-CHILDREN IN KEBBI STATE, NIGERIA

Some significant number of children in Kebbi State have either never been enrolled in schools or they have been withdrawn from school for a wide range of reasons that vary according to location. Noticeable among these reasons include household poverty, deep-rooted beliefs, cultural norms and practices such as early marriage customs, religion and societal expectations limiting girl-child access to education, and more recently is the problem of insecurity rampaging the Kebbi South senatorial zone exacerbating increase in out of school children. The vulnerable groups of children whom BESDA project hope to address in Kebbi State include:

1. **The Girl Child:** Girl children constituted the bulk of out-of-school children in Kebbi State and Nigeria as a whole (Adesola, 2021; Hayab *et al.*, 2023). Empirical evidences have revealed that in most parts of the country the girl children are either never been enrolled in schools or they have been withdrawn from schools for a wide range of reasons including socio-economic and cultural factors such as early marriages, hawking and other economic challenges among others (FRN/World Bank, 2017; Dewan, 2021). In recognition of the significant of the girl child education to family life and the need to increase female enrolment in basic education, the BESDA project is directed at supporting targeted initiatives such as the provision of girl-friendly infrastructure and special incentives that will not only bring back the girl child to school but will also increase enrolment rate and enhance the quality of learning, which will contributed to increasing completion rate of girls in primary school in the State.
2. **Almajiri Children:** "Almajiri" as they are traditionally addressed are often boys who are largely coming from poor households and may or may not be attending a religious, informal residential Qur'anic education that is very common among the northern states. Almajiri children constitute a significant percentage of out-of-school children in Kebbi State (Dominic *et al.*, 2020). They convene in places which are largely situated at Malams' residents'. Hence, they are classified as informal schools since they fall outside the mainstream conventional structure. Many of these students have been brought to these schools by their parents from other locations for the purpose of learning how to recite the holy Qur'an. However, most of these Almajiri children are seen regularly on the streets, at Filling Stations, Motor Park or Restaurants with small bowls begging for food (Dominic *et al.*, 2020). Although, the Almajiri education program was introduced by the federal government of Nigeria from 2011-2015 that saw the establishment of integrated Almajiri model schools that include formal

education subjects and the Qur'an (FRN/World Bank, 2017), however, mainstreaming such initiative has been a major challenge in Nigeria. Nevertheless, the BESDA project in the state is directed towards providing support for this initiative of integrating conventional education into Qur'anic education for the purpose of educating these young lads in Kebbi State.

3. **Children with Disabilities:** In Kebbi State, children with various forms of disabilities, including physical, mental and learning disabilities are among the most educationally disadvantaged segment of the population, with large number of out-of-school rates (Dominic *et al.*, 2020). Most of these children have resorted to street begging. Although the state government have established special school for people with disability with the intention to address their educational needs, however, it appear that this not enough (Dominic *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, there is need for inclusive education with appropriate assistive technologies that can guarantee access to quality education and active participation of children with disabilities. The BESDA project is equally interested in bringing to school this segment of the population in other to reduce the risk of exclusion and marginalisation of children with disabilities in Kebbi state.
4. **Children of Nomadic Pastoralists, Farmers and Migrant Fisher Folks:** Nomadic Pastoralists, farmers and migrant fisher folks forms a considerable number of Kebbi population. However, their children are among the most educationally disadvantaged in the state with very high number of out-of-school rates. Although, there are nomadic schools in the State, however the schools have permanent structures with little or no mobile classrooms. The BESDA project is also interested in these categories of out-of-school children with the plan to support flexible nomadic basic education program for the children of pastoral nomads and migrant farmers and fisher folks in Kebbi State.
5. **Displaced Children:** These are children whose as a result of armed conflict or disasters has been force to move away from their original locations, with or without their parents to new locations, including the IDP camps (Mamman, 2021). Most of these children have lost access to education, healthcare, and other social services, especially where they are located outside the IDP camp as in the case with displaced persons in Kebbi South, where the activities of the bandits is severe and yet no single IDP camp has been established. Some of these children became vulnerable due to loss of parents in the armed conflict and are less likely to attend schools and those enrolled in school are likely to drop out due lack of support (Sarkinfa, 2023). Although, under the safe school initiative, they affected children in the conflict are expected to be transferred to schools in safe areas within or outside the states (Mamman, 2021); however, this will require concerted efforts and coordination among all stakeholders. The BESDA project of no child is left behind is there to support the relocation and education of these categories of children.

## SECURITIZATION THEORY AND THE NIGERIAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

This theory was propounded by Buzan, Waever & Wilde in 1998 from Copenhagen School. The term securitization is the processes by which state actors transform subjects into matters of security concern that allow extraordinary measures to be taken in matters of security (Ossai, 2022). Securitization is largely used in military, political, economic, societal and environmental studies. However, it has recently begun to be applied in the field of education in discussing school security (Jacob *et al.*, 2021).

The securitization framework allows for a threat to be probable and protracted and endangers the existence of the nation. Buzan *et al.* (1998) considered an existential threat as one that requires immediate solution and if not tackled, everything else becomes irrelevant as we may not have the opportunity to deal with the resulting consequences. Securitization theorists postulated further that when a subject is essentially securitized, it will attract a higher degree of attention and resources toward it despite the existence of other subjects.

Buzan *et al.* (1998) opined that the success of the securitization process depends on who securitizes



(Securitizing actor); what issues are securitized (threats); for whom (referent object); the audience (people); the reason for securitization; the condition of securitization, and the result of the securitization acts. Thus, the securitizing actor is the person who initiates the move to securitize an issue. This move arises from the establishment of an existential threat. The threat is an ideal potential that could be harmful if left unchecked (Ossai, 2022). A referent object is that which is being threatened and therefore needs to be protected (Jacob *et al.*, 2021). The audience is the target of the securitization that needs to be persuaded to accept the issue of concern as a security threat (Ossai, 2022). Hence, for the securitization act to be successful, it must be accepted by the audience. If a subject is successfully securitized, then, it is possible to legitimize extraordinary means to solve a perceived problem; which could include declaring a state of emergency (Buzan *et al.*, 1998; Naujoks, 2015).

Education has been considered the cornerstone for the advancement of individuals and national development. No nation can develop above its educational standard (Emeka & Dominic, 2020). Considering the supreme contribution of education to national development, it is, therefore, inevitable to acquire education in a safe school environment. Notwithstanding, since schools in Nigeria have in recent times experienced attacks from gunmen and other forms of insecurity, hence, it is necessary to employ the securitization theory when discussing school security in the Nigerian education system. Securitization of schools will require that all stakeholders in the education sector including, the government, non-governmental organizations, school administrators, teachers, and parents among others accept the reality of the threat and danger posed by insecurity and its implications on the provision of universal basic education in Nigeria.

In this case, the students, teachers, and school administrators, who are vulnerable to school attacks, are the principal actors. The securitization actors will refer to the parents, the mass media and other stakeholders, who should raise alarm about the increasing dangers of insecurity in schools. This has become necessary to create awareness and draw the attention of educational policymakers, government and security agencies about the state of security of schools and the need to adopt extraordinary measures to tackle the threat of insecurity in Nigeria's schools.

The extraordinary measure for safe school initiative could involve the deployment of special military personnel to secure schools or the allocation of more funds to the education sector to help schools acquire cutting-edge security gadgets such as CCTV cameras to curtail these attacks (Ugwuoke *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, to make these strategies successful, the audience in the securitization process must be involved. In this case, the audience is the entire citizens. Ossai (2022) opined that, in the case of the Boko-Haram terrorist group attacks on schools, it is important for their ideology and its effect to be seen as negative more than it is in the sect itself. Thus, when the school insecurity issue in Nigeria is addressed as postulated in the securitization framework, it is possible to manage its long-term effect in Nigeria.

### **Implications to the Achievement of Better Education Service Delivery for All in Kebbi State, Nigeria**

The BESDA project which commenced in the state in 2019 with the inauguration of steering and technical committees was committed to ensuring that all children, especially those who are out-of-school, have equal opportunities to access quality education in the state. However, considering the severity of damages to educational facilities in the affected places, especially around the southern Kebbi State, it is clear to say that the activity of gunmen has brought about an unprecedented educational crisis, that resulted in the total disruption of school in the affected regions. This is disproportionately impacting the education of thousands of school children in Kebbi State. School-aged children within the conflict-prone areas are affected in a variety of ways by the enforced migration and forceful closure of schools due to insecurity. This has brought about an increase in school dropout thereby raising the number of out-of-school children in the State. Thus, many of the educational and social consequences of the insecurity could have long-term effects on the

affected persons and the state even if the state government managed to end insecurity today.

More so, the continuous closure of schools in some parts of the state will continue to impact negatively on the realisation of BESDA agenda of bringing back to school the out-of-school children. Hence, the insecurity has presented the state and the local governments with challenges that require unprecedented inclusive responses with alternatives to complement the traditional in-class teaching and learning system. This will include the adoption of online instruction modes, and nomadic education mechanisms as well as the provision of mobile classrooms/education at the various IDP camps.

## CONCLUSION

Schools in Nigeria have experienced more violent attacks by gunmen in recent times than ever before. Some of these attacks were reported to be deadly, claiming the lives of students, teachers and school administrators as well as destruction of properties. The effect of these attacks has further exacerbated pressure on the fragile school system faced with low enrolment and infrastructural decay. The growing activities of bandits and other gun crimes in the North West region of Nigeria have significantly hampered the efforts of the World Bank initiative in helping state governments bring back to school the out-of-school children in this region. Thus, it is clear to say that the primary objective of BESDA intervention may not be fully achieved within the stipulated 5-year duration; as there are school-aged children drawn in the nooks and crannies of Kebbi State who were neither been enrolled in school nor must have been forced to leave school by the activities of gun-men. Hence, the researcher suggested that there is a need to improve the funding of Nigerian education to improve the security of schools through the implementation of safe school initiatives and the adoption of multiple and flexible learning pathways that can guarantee anywhere and anytime learning during emergencies. Improving security in this region will help address not only the number of out-of-school children but will also go a long way in ensuring that enrolment, retention and completion of out-of-school children in schools.

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