Safety Intelligence and Security Management in Public Secondary Schools in Epe Local Government Area, Lagos State

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ABSTRACT

The research adopted a descriptive survey design. The respondents were selected via simple random sampling. Four hundred participants including 19 principals and 381 students were the targeted population for this study. Findings from this study show that majority of schools have the basic safety and security apparatus but lack the knowledge and experience to employ them in the event of a disaster. Results also show that there is no subject in the school curriculum from kindergarten to secondary level that teaches on safety and security management. Public secondary schools in Epe LGA do not also have constituted disaster management committees or an emergency management plan. Most students however do not know how to use safety and security gadgets in their school premises. The study therefore recommended that a disaster/emergency management curriculum should be inaugurated in public school to teach students on how to respond in cases of emergencies and prevent emergencies.

KEYWORDS

Lagos, Management, Public School, Safety, Security

INTRODUCTION

The rising wave of danger and insecurity in the Nigeria has found expression in many unpleasant incidents. Schools and educational facilities have not been spared from this menace, as reflected in the spate of abductions, rape, building collapse, violence, and killings involving students and their teachers. Public and even private secondary schools face a range of serious threat to their lives. The security of schools has become an indispensable issue in this era of pervasive terrorism. Consequently, terrorists have had a field day after selecting schools as soft targets for attacks, resulting in the destruction of school facilities, deaths of teaching, non-teaching staff as well as students, leading to prolonged closure of schools and the subsequent traumatic aftermaths. Terrorist attacks on educational institutions have taken many forms: armed assaults, bombings, hostage takings, chemical attacks, and arson. The first terrorist attack against students was executed on March 18, 1968 by the Palestinian group Al-Fatah against a school bus carrying children. Since then, global school terror attacks have been on the rise (Bradford and Wilson, 2013; Coughlan, 2015; Gilsinan, 2014).

In many parts of the world, young people and children are living lives of hopelessness and despair. A quarter of all school-aged children live in countries devastated by conflict, millions are displaced refugees, and millions more are growing up in communities plagued by poverty. As a result, more than 263 million children and young people are now out of school, 63 million of them are young adolescents' primary school age (UIS and UNICEF 2015). Without education, there is high chances that children will face a future of thwarted ambitions and broken dreams, therefore, lack the skills to gain meaningful employment and, out of anger and frustration, some of them will embrace extremism and violence (Dallaire, 2010). The sad fact is that terrorism appears to give a twisted sense of purpose and belonging to the desperate and the hopeless. More so, in a marginalized and disadvantaged communities, terrorism can spread like a virus. As a result, education remains the world's best vaccine against terrorism (Cieslak, et al., 2000; Time, 2018).

Beginning from 2010, the terrorist attacks on educational institutions have reached the highest level since its first report in the 1970s (Gerbner, 1988; Hudson, 1999a; LaFree and Dugan, 2007). Research on terrorist targeting schools and other educational institutions reveals that the motivation to target such places originates from the legitimacy of the state authority; the educational attainment of youths, particularly girls; the need to recruit school children into terrorist ranks, forcefully marry them, or use them as sex slaves; and the urge to retaliate (Hudson, 1999a; Borum, 2004; Singer, 2006; Otterbacher, 2016; Idris, 2018). Yet another reason why terrorists might choose to target educational institutions is the intense media coverage such an incident attracts, which provides a platform from which they can advance their cause, gain attention, amplify panic, and instigate fear (Hudson, 1999a; Saunders and Goddard, 2002; Weimann, 2004; Matusitz, 2018).

In Nigeria, Boko Haram terrorist groups are now resorted to kidnapping women and girls in order to engender global emotional responses as well as to gain intensive media coverage and infuse fear among populations (Bradford and Wilson, 2013). Boko Haram has abducted over 1,000 children in northeast Nigeria since 2013 including the 276 school girls abducted in April 14, 2014 from a boarding school in Chibok town in the northeast Nigeria (Bodansky, 2015; Adepelumi, 2018; ABC News 2018; UNICEF 2018). Some of the Chibok schoolgirls managed to escape, some were later rescued or freed following negotiations while more than 100 of them are yet to gain their freedom. Between 2009 and April 2018, Boko Haram insurgents have killed almost 2,295 teachers and destroyed no less than 1,400 schools, unfortunately, most of these schools have not been able to reopen due to extensive damage as well as insecurity tension in the region (ABC News, 2018; UNICEF 2018).

In 2018, suspected Boko Haram terrorists abducted 110 students from a girls' boarding school in 'Dapchi' a town in the northeast, Nigeria. After one month, 104 of the abducted schoolgirls were freed following "back-channel efforts from within and outside country" (ABC News, 2018; CNN 2018; UNICEF 2018).

In addition, various studies also revealed that there has been an upward trend in the number of attacks on school children since 2010 (Barak, 2003; Simatwa, 2012; Darling-Hammond et al., 2019; Onditi, 2018; Wamugunda et al., 2019). This development has hampered the issue of access to school, promoted dropout and scale down teachers' interest in schooling (Banerjee and Lamb 2016; Alimba, 2018). Hence, the need to understand security and safety public schools in Nigeria particularly in the Southwest region should not be compromised.

Cases of reported security and safety challenges in public schools in Lagos State have been alarming. Schools that are the citadel of learning have in recent times become a den bedeviled with safety and security threats. Safety intelligence and security management should be given paramount importance in schools. The colossal rate of youth unemployment, abject poverty, corruption, moral decadence, indiscipline, inflation, poor standard of living, high cost of living, inadequacy of security personnel, poor motivation of law enforcement agencies, loss of societal value and get rich quick syndrome among others can be adjudged to be the reasons for the rising safety and security challenges in present times (Odumbo et al., 2017). Inadequate security personnel have exposed the weakness and

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