

Assessing the Safety of Pupils and Teachers in Secondary Schools: A Study of Chikun Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria

การประเมินความปลอดภัยของนักเรียนและครูในโรงเรียนมัธยมศึกษา: การศึกษาพื้นที่ปกครองท้องถิ่นชิกุน รัฐคานูนา ประเทศไนจีเรีย

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Abstract

This current research paper investigated the factors contributing to an insecure school environment, with reference to Chikun Local Government Area (CLGA), Kaduna State, Nigeria. We adopted the mixed-method approach to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, utilizing semi-structured questionnaires and interviews with 420 respondents, including pupils, teachers, and school administrators from twelve randomly selected secondary schools. The findings revealed that the major factors contributing to insecure school environments include bullying (95%), trespassing (95.2%), illicit drug and substance abuse (84.2%), sexual harassment (72%), and banditry activities (66.4%). Results showed that the majority (86%) of respondents reported their unawareness of school safety and emergency procedures. The study also identified inadequate funding for security measures (93.0%), a lack of training on safety measures (92%), and fear of reporting safety concerns to school management (88%) as the major challenges hindering efforts to ensure the safety of pupils and teachers in schools. In line with these results, the study suggests implementing mass awareness campaigns, maintaining physical infrastructure, implementing safe school initiatives, personal safety, and self-defense, reporting security concerns, and increasing funding for school security.

Keywords: Secondary school, Safety, Insecurity, Self-defense

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยฉบับปัจจุบันนี้ได้ทำการศึกษาปัจจัยต่างๆ ที่มีส่วนทำให้สภาพแวดล้อมในโรงเรียนไม่ปลอดภัย โดยอ้างอิงถึงพื้นที่ปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่นซีกัน (CLGA) รัฐคาตุนา ประเทศไนจีเรีย เราใช้วิธีการแบบผสมผสานเพื่อรวบรวมข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณและเชิงคุณภาพ โดยใช้แบบสอบถามแบบกึ่งโครงสร้างและการสัมภาษณ์ผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม 420 ราย ซึ่งรวมถึงนักเรียน ครู และผู้บริหารโรงเรียนจากโรงเรียนมัธยมศึกษา 12 แห่งที่สุ่มเลือก จากผลการศึกษาพบว่าปัจจัยหลักที่ส่งผลให้สภาพแวดล้อมในโรงเรียนไม่ปลอดภัย ได้แก่ การกลั่นแกล้ง (95%) การบุกรุก (95.2%) การใช้ยาเสพติดและสารเสพติดผิดกฎหมาย (84.2%) การล่องละเมิดทางเพศ (72%) และกิจกรรมของกลุ่มโจร (66.4%) ผลลัพธ์แสดงให้เห็นว่าผู้ตอบแบบสอบถามส่วนใหญ่ (86%) รายงานว่าไม่ทราบถึงความปลอดภัยของโรงเรียนและขั้นตอนฉุกเฉิน การศึกษายังระบุถึงการขาดแคลนเงินทุนสำหรับมาตรการรักษาความปลอดภัย (93.0%) การขาดการฝึกอบรมเกี่ยวกับมาตรการความปลอดภัย (92%) และความกลัวที่จะรายงานข้อกังวลด้านความปลอดภัยต่อฝ่ายบริหารโรงเรียน (88%) เป็นความท้าทายหลักที่ขัดขวางความพยายามในการสร้างความมั่นใจในความปลอดภัยของนักเรียนและครูในโรงเรียน สอดคล้องกับผลลัพธ์เหล่านี้ การศึกษาได้เสนอให้ดำเนินการรณรงค์สร้างความตระหนักในวงกว้าง การบำรุงรักษาสิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกพื้นฐาน การดำเนินโครงการโรงเรียนปลอดภัย ความปลอดภัยส่วนบุคคลและการป้องกันตนเอง การรายงานข้อกังวลด้านความปลอดภัย และการเพิ่มเงินทุนสำหรับความปลอดภัยของโรงเรียน

คำสำคัญ: โรงเรียนมัธยม, ความปลอดภัย, ความไม่มั่นคง, การป้องกันตนเอง

Introduction

Schools in Nigeria have faced a troubling rise in violence and criminal activities manifested through bullying, drug and substance abuse, corporal punishment, kidnappings, insurgency, and bandit activities. The issue has been a subject that attracted the rapid attention of scholars, commentators, policymakers, and law enforcement agencies in Nigeria. The frequency and severity of violence and criminal activities in schools have risen compared to past decades, leading to fear and insecurity among pupils and teachers. This horrible situation reduced the number of pupils, teachers, and school administrators required for the effective functioning of schools, especially in the northern states of Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe, Gombe, Bauchi, Taraba, Plateau, Niger, Adamawa, and Bornu, among others (Mohammed et al., 2021). The 2019 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) study by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2019) shows that the Boko Haram insurgency in the northwest has led to the demise of over 2,300 teachers. Similarly, Okewo & Kayode (as cited in Danjuma et al., 2024) argued that students who graduated in the era of insecurity do not possess the required education and skills needed to work in either private or public establishments.

Pupils or teachers who experienced violence may develop psychological problems, which may affect their education, according to Bello & Abubakar (2024). Ibrahim & Ahmad (2020) found that most of the pupils kidnapped by armed bandits show signs of fear and anxiety after their release. Furthermore, Jacob & Ndubuisi (2021) remind us that incessant attacks led to the closure of schools in Nigeria. For instance, Borno State closed both primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions for more than two years (Danjuma et al., 2023). The abduction of hundreds of students in Katsina, Kaduna, and Niger states forced

many state governments to order the closure of schools in the northern region. This decision has negatively affected pupils' education and prevented the completion of syllabi.

The persistent recurrence of safety problems in Nigerian schools poses serious questions that require urgent responses if similar incidents are to be prevented in the future. According to Sani et al. (2024a), in Kaduna State, CLGA has witnessed a surge in violent criminal activities, such as armed banditry, kidnapping, communal clashes, and insurgency. The activities of criminals, coupled with other social problems such as drug & substance abuse, poor nutrition, assaults, fire outbreaks, and diseases, create a volatile atmosphere for various communities and schools in the area. The pervasiveness of these deviants and criminal acts is proved by the kidnapping of two hundred and eighty-seven (287) pupils and their teachers in a government secondary school in Kuriga village of CLGA and the abduction of eighty-six (86) people in Kajuru (Aodu & Samson, 2024), which are just a few cases of the numerous kidnapping incidents by armed bandits in the area.

Despite the prevalence of safety problems in Nigerian educational institutions, there is a paucity of literature that examines school safety in areas like the CLGA, where insecurity is a serious issue. Previous studies, such as Adebayo (2013), Okafor & Akinwale (2020), have focused on broader school safety at the national level and often failed to include pupils' and teachers' perceptions of bullying, drug and substance abuse, and inadequate security systems in schools. Therefore, this current study aims to fill these gaps by assessing the safety of pupils and teachers in secondary schools in CLGA, Kaduna.

Significance of the study

The study will reveal the various factors contributing to an unsafe school environment in the study area. It will encourage pupils to practice personal safety and self-defense to safeguard themselves in school and other places. The study will also encourage school administrators and teachers to recognize the need for seminar or workshop programs to improve the safety and security of the pupils. Most importantly, the study will inform policymakers and other stakeholders of the need to improve school security and safety in CLGA.

Literature review

Safe School

Generally speaking, the term "safe school" does not have a single accepted meaning, definition, or explanation. However, according to Hernandez et al. (2010), a safe school is a place of learning where pupils, educators, and school administrators feel physically and psychologically free from any form of threats. James (2011) defined a safe school as a place where teaching and learning are not distracted by threats such as violence, drug and substance abuse, bullying, armed bandit attacks, abduction, corporal punishment, etc., among others. Therefore, it can be said that a safe school environment has proactive and reactive crisis response initiatives to address future threats and dangers that may harm pupils, teachers, and other stakeholders.

In educational studies, scholars employed a mixed-methods approach to examine issues more fully (Reyneke 2024). Past studies have shown that the application of a mixed-methods design is useful for exploring issues, like the safety of pupils and teachers. A South African study employed mixed methods to evaluate the Thari program, which aims to reduce violence in schools, and found that psychological support creates a safer and more peaceful school environment (Reyneke, 2024). Another mixed-methods study by Yasmeen et al. (2023) showed that an administrator's leadership style, fair decision-making, and conflict resolution lead to a positive school environment. Combining questionnaire responses with interviews can allow researchers to measure the widespread safety concerns and also how pupils, teachers, and administrators perceive them.

Unsafe School Environment

"Unsafe" refers to a dangerous condition that puts individuals or property at risk. Onyewuchi & Ijeoma (2021, p. 1394) described an unsafe school environment as "a situation where the safety of the school environment is lacking." Typically, when pupils, teachers, and school administrators are exposed to any form of threat or danger in the school environment, they may feel uncomfortable and insecure. According to Onyewuchi & Ijeoma (2021), an insecure school environment can lead to truancy among pupils and teachers or a total disruption of the academic calendar, which in turn negatively impacts students' academic performance. A United Nations study on violence against children reveals that children, including pupils across the globe, are at risk of numerous threats like terror attacks, rape, bullying, corporal punishment, sexual harassment, cultism, etc., among others. In most cases, teachers, school administrators, and peers are the culprits (UNICEF, 2009, cited in Olayonu & Sa'adu, 2023).

Factors Affecting the Safety of Pupils, Teachers, and School Administrators

1. Banditry: Banditry, according to Okolie & Okpaleke (as cited in Igbini, 2022, p. 54), refers to "the use of force or threat to that effect to intimidate a person or a group of persons to rob, rape, or kill perpetrated by criminal opportunists and syndicates in the countryside and frontiers of countries." In Nigeria, banditry is increasing at an alarming rate, claiming the lives of innocent citizens. Aderinto (2010) reminds us about the 2016 incident, where an unknown armed group kidnapped pupils, teachers, and the school principal of Model College in Lagos State, Nigeria.

2. Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment refers to unacceptable and immoral repetitive conduct of a sexual nature (Sharma et al., 2023). According to Sharma et al. (2023), sexual harassment is found among both teachers and pupils. He added that pupils, especially females, are more likely to experience sexual harassment in or outside school, which consequently prevents them from continuing with their studies (Aderinto, 2010).

3. Drug abuse: Drug or substance abuse is a problem affecting the safety of learners in Nigeria. The Sani et al. (2024) study revealed an increasing use and misuse of illicit drugs among teenagers. Studies revealed that secondary school pupils knowingly or unknowingly use drugs and substances (Lawoyin et al., 2005; Idowu et al., 2018). Drug abuse has a detrimental impact on the academic

performance of students who use drugs for non-prescribed reasons. In other words, students who engage in drug and substance abuse tend to perform poorly in school and are often involved in cheating, cultism, or conflicts with their classmates and teachers (Sani et al., 2024).

4. Bullying: Olweus (as cited in Ighaede-Edwards et al., 2023) defined bullying as “a deliberate act of aggressive behavior against an individual.” A recent bullying incident at a private secondary school in the Federal Capital Territory has drawn the attention of parents, educators, policymakers, and concerned citizens both within and outside Nigeria. Other alarming cases include reports of sexual assault and violence against students by either their peers, teachers, or school administrators (Maishanu, 2021).

Preventive Measures to Guarantee the Safety of Pupils, Teachers, and Staff in School

Pupils and teachers feel less safe when they constantly see or experience violence in the school environment (James, 2011). In other words, they feel safer when they understand that their protectors, including teachers, school administrators, and their parents, are effective in combating the factors that may lead to victimization. Dawee et al. (2011) discovered that school administrators play a vital role in ensuring the safety of pupils, teachers, and the school environment. These functions include careful recruitment of teachers and other staff, organizing in-house workshops on school crime prevention for pupils and teachers, awareness programs on violence prevention in bullying, racial assaults, and other deviant behaviors, and establishing a good relationship with the pupils' parents (Punukollu, 2019; Dymnicki et al., 2021).

A safe school environment is characterized by the presence of physical security, including secure walls, gates, Closed Circuit Television (CCTV), alarm systems, furnished classrooms and offices, proper landscaping, and physical security guards (Dewee et al., 2024). If effectively implemented, these measures can help increase the safety of the pupils, teachers, and properties.

The government's role is crucial in ensuring the safety of pupils. The primary aim of a responsible government is to protect the lives and properties of its citizens, including keeping schools safe. The role of the government at all levels in education shows the significance of collaborative effort regarding school safety. Thus, the government should develop and implement school safety initiatives aimed at protecting pupils and teachers from violence and other threats.

Challenges Faced in Safeguarding Pupils, Teachers, and School Administrators

1. Lack of perimeter fence: Manning & Bucher (2013) acknowledge the lack of a wall or fence that surrounds the school as a factor that discourages the efforts of stakeholders in providing safety to pupils in school. According to Dewee et al. (2024), a proper perimeter fence can prevent intruders from entering school premises and can improve the safety of pupils, teachers, and other personnel in school.

2. Lack of maintenance of school facilities: Schools with inadequate structures, such as classrooms, halls, dormitories, and laboratories to accommodate pupils, are more likely to be overcrowded and experience safety issues (Manning & Bucher, 2013). Generally speaking, teachers and

administrators in overcrowded schools may find it difficult to ensure the safety of the pupils and also increase the chances of sexual assaults, rape, bullying, and drug and substance abuse incidents.

3. Inadequate funding: Mohammed et al. (2021) reported that insufficient school funding is a challenge faced by schools in Nigeria. The issue of inadequate funding affects the smooth functioning of schools, which in turn leads to overcrowded classes, unequipped libraries, damage to infrastructure, theft of school property, and fighting among students (Mohammed et al., 2021).

4. Insecurity: Insecurity is a common phenomenon in Nigeria, especially in educational institutions. Insecurity in schools signifies that pupils, teachers, and school administrators are in a state of fear or threat of criminal attacks (Mohammed et al., 2021). Many pupils, teachers, and school administrators have been killed; some abducted, and schools destroyed by armed bandits. Insecurity has become a challenge in ensuring the safety of pupils and teachers in Nigeria (Mohammed et al., 2021).

Research Objectives

The study aimed to:

1. Identify the factors contributing to an insecure school environment in CLGA.
2. Examine the safety and security measures in schools in CLGA.
3. Examine challenges faced by schools in safeguarding pupils and teachers in CLGA.
4. Suggest strategies to enhance safety and security in schools.

Methodology

The study used a descriptive survey design, widely used in the social and management sciences, to gather respondents' perceptions of the factors contributing to unsafe school environments, safety measures, and challenges in CLGA, Kaduna State, Nigeria (Sani et al., 2024).

The population consisted of secondary school pupils, teachers, and school administrators. According to the Annual School Census 2023/2024 Report, the combined population of secondary school pupils from both private and public schools in CLGA is approximately 44,897 (Kaduna State Bureau of Statistics, 2024). The study employed the sampling method by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) to establish the sample size. The stated formula: $s = \frac{X^2 \cdot N \cdot P(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + X^2 \cdot P(1-P)}$ where s = sample size, $N = 44,897$, $P = 0.5$, $d = 0.05$, and $X^2 = 3.841$ (for 95% confidence). Substituting these values produced a required sample of 381 respondents.

To improve accuracy, account for non-response, and ensure proportional representation across school types, the sample was deliberately increased to 420 respondents, corresponding to the margin of error of 4.76% at 95% confidence. Therefore, we utilized the stratified multi-stage sampling technique. First, the schools were divided into two: private secondary schools and government secondary schools. Second, six (6) schools from each stratum were randomly selected using the lottery method of simple random sampling, giving a total of 12 secondary schools. The third stage involves the random selection of 35 pupils from each of the selected schools. Hence, a total of 420 participants were randomly selected.

A semi-structured questionnaire and IDI are the major instruments used for data collection. The researchers submitted the designed instrument to two experts for scrutiny and advice. Their constructive responses enriched the validity of the instrument. Afterward, 30 copies of the updated instrument were administered to pupils in three different secondary schools in the Kaduna South Local Government Area to test its suitability for use in the study. The retrieved questionnaires were analyzed, and the computed internal consistency was confirmed during pilot testing (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$), indicating internal consistency. Concerning the qualitative data, trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation and member checking.

The collected data were sorted, coded, and entered into SPSS software (version 25). The quantitative data were analyzed to compute frequencies and percentages based on the five-point Likert scale: 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = undecided, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree. The qualitative data were analyzed and presented thematically in a narrative form.

In this study, the inclusion criteria were voluntary from willing respondents who gave informed consent to take part in the survey and IDI, a pupil aged 15 to 30 enrolled in secondary school in CLGA, and a teacher or school administrator in secondary school in CLGA willing to participate in IDI. To ensure that the study collected data from the intended target population, respondents who were unwilling to participate, outside the age range, or not enrolled in a secondary school in CLGA were excluded from the study.

Most importantly, the study ensures absolute confidentiality among respondents. As such, the researchers obtained permission from the school's administrators before commencing the data collection. At the beginning of each process, respondents were required to fill out a consent form and reminded that participation was voluntary and that they could opt out at any stage of the research.

Results

Table 1 Data of the Respondents

Characteristics	n= 420	%
Gender/Sex		
Male	249	59.2
Female	171	40.7
Age		
15-19 years	128	30.4
20-24 years	102	24.2
25- 29 years	120	28.5
30 years above	70	16.6
School location		
Urban	311	74.1
Rural	109	25.9

Characteristics	n= 420	%
Type of school		
Government	320	76.1
Private	100	23.8

(Source: Field, 2025)

The socio-demographic details of the sampled respondents are shown in **Table 1**. It was established that the study surveyed 420 respondents. According to the study findings, 59.2% were male, while 40.7% were female. The majority of the respondents were between the ages of 15 and 29 years. 74% were from the urban part of the study area, while the remaining 26% were from the countryside. 76.1% of the respondents attended government schools, while 24% attended private schools in the study area.

Table 2 Responses on the Factors Contributing to Unsafe School (%)

Description of items	Agree	Disagree	Total
I feel safe while at school	24.0	75.9	100
Banditry (e.g., armed attacks, kidnappings) is a concern affecting the safety of my school.	66.4	33.5	100
Sexual harassment of pupils is a problem in my school.	71.9	28.0	100
Drug abuse among students is a serious issue in my school.	84.2	15.7	100
Bullying is a common issue in my school.	95.0	5	100
Lack of security personnel contributes to the insecurity in my school.	69.0	30.9	100
Outsiders (e.g., strangers or unauthorized individuals) entering the school compound make the environment feel unsafe.	95.2	4.7	100
The lack of proper lighting in certain areas of the school contributes to a sense of insecurity.	63.3	36.6	100

(Source: Field, 2025)

According to the results in Table 2, a significant proportion (76%) of the surveyed respondents disagree that they feel safe at school, while the remaining 24.0% agree. 66.4% agree that banditry, including attacks by armed men, abduction, etc., is a concerning issue affecting the safety of pupils, teachers, and the school community; the remaining 36% did not think so. 72% agree that sexual harassment of pupils by either teachers, school administrators, visitors, or the students themselves is a problem in their school, while the remaining 28.0% disagree. On the other hand, 84.2% identified the use of illicit drugs and substances among pupils as a problem, creating an unsafe school atmosphere, while the remaining 16% did not think so. Bullying is identified by the majority (95%) as the common issue threatening their safety while in school, while the remaining 5% disagree. Further, 69% agreed that inadequate security guards contribute to insecurity in their school, while 31% disagreed. 95.2% agree

that unauthorized entry into their school premises by unknown individuals creates an unsafe school atmosphere, while 4.7% disagreed. 63.3% agree that the lack of proper lighting in their school contributes to an unsafe school environment, while 37% disagreed.

The IDI supported these findings. One participant (male, 54 years old, school administrator of a government secondary school) mentioned that “bullying is a common issue in our society, especially in schools... whether physical fights or verbal abuses. It creates an unsafe atmosphere that affects pupils and teachers.” Another participant (female, 30 years old, teacher in a private secondary school) stated that “drug and substance abuse is rampant... Some pupils come to school under the influence of illicit drugs or substances, which leads to risky behaviors.” She added that “sexual harassment is another serious problem... A teacher in a neighboring school was suspended over alleged harassment of a female pupil.” Another participant (a female, 46 years old, school administrator of a government secondary school) opined that “banditry is the biggest horror in Nigeria, particularly the Northwest region... My school is susceptible to bandit attacks because it is situated in a rural area.”

Table 3 Responses on the Safety Measures (%)

Description of items	Agree	Disagree	Total
My school has security personnel or guards present	35.7	64.2	100
My school has clear safety rules and guidelines.	28.3	71.6	100
The safety measures in my school (such as cameras and drills) are effective	14.0	85.9	100
I am aware of the emergency procedures in place at my school.	18.8	81.1	100
Visitors to my school are required to check in and show identification.	3.5	96.4	100

(Source: Field, 2025)

According to the results in Table 3, two-thirds (72%) indicated their disagreement with the statement that there are clear safety rules and procedures in their school, while the remaining portion (28.3%) agrees. 86% disagreed that safety measures such as the installation of CCTV cameras, good perimeter fences, strong gates, monthly drills, etc., in their school are effective, while the remaining 14% agreed. 86% indicated their unawareness of the safety procedures put in place to safeguard them from any threat or danger, while very few (14.0%) indicated their awareness. 81.1% disagreed with the statement that visitors to their school undergo proper checks before granting access, while the remaining 19% agreed. 64.2% disagreed with the statement that their school provided security personnel to safeguard them from possible threats and dangers; only a few (34%) agreed.

IDI corroborated these findings. A participant (female, 39 years old, school administrator of a private secondary school) shared, “Although there are safety rules like the National Policy on Safety,

Security, and Violence-Free Schools in Nigeria (SSVFSN, 2021), the majority of the pupils and teachers are unaware of them... There is always a mix-up about what to do during an emergency.” Another participant (a male, 29 years old, teacher at a public secondary school) mentioned that “safety is everyone’s business, but in most schools, particularly government ones, the measures remain ineffective.”

Table 4 Responses on the Challenges Faced by Schools in Safeguarding Pupils and Teachers (%)

Description of items	Agree	Disagree	Total
My school faces challenges in ensuring a safe environment.	95.0	5.0	100
There is sufficient funding for security measures in my school.	6.9	93.0	100
Staff and students receive adequate training on safety procedures.	7.6	92.3	100
I feel comfortable reporting safety concerns to school authorities.	11.9	88.0	100

(Source: Field, 2025)

As per the results in Table 4, a significant proportion, 95%, agreed with the statement that their school faced challenges in actualizing a safe school environment for all, while a few, 5%, disagreed. Most of them (93%) disagreed that there is adequate funding for safety measures in their school; the remaining 7% agreed. 92.3% disagreed with the statement that teachers, pupils, and other staff received adequate training on safety procedures, while the remaining 8% agreed. 88% are uncomfortable reporting safety concerns to the school administrators, while the remaining 12% said they are comfortable.

These challenges were echoed in the IDI; a participant (male, 45 years old, school administrator of a government senior secondary school) stated that “keeping the school environment safe is a big challenge... Without a budget for security, we cannot afford basic security gadgets such as intruder alarm systems, metal detectors, cameras, etc.” Similarly, another participant (male, 29 years old, teacher at a private junior secondary school) shared his opinion as follows: “I don’t feel prepared to handle emergencies because we don’t receive safety training.”

Table 5 Responses on Measures for Improving Safety in Schools (%)

Description of items	Agree	Disagree	Total
More security personnel would improve safety in my school.	92.8	7.1	100
Safety education and training for pupils and teachers would improve school security.	74.0	26.0	100
Improving physical infrastructure (like fences and gates) would enhance safety in school.	95.2	4.7	100
Stricter rules for visitors would make the school safer.	95.9	4.0	100

(Source: Field, 2025)

Table 5 shows that the majority (92.8%) agreed and suggested that the provision of adequate security guards can improve the safety of pupils and teachers, while the remaining 7.1% disagreed. 95.2% agreed with the statements that improving physical infrastructures may enhance the safety of lives and properties in schools, while the remaining 4.7% disagreed. 95.9% agreed that stricter rules for visitors would improve safety in school; the remaining 4.0% disagreed. 74.0% agreed with the statement that there is a need for safety education and training for both students and staff, while the remaining 26.0% disagreed.

Discussion

Factors Contributing to Unsafe School Environment

The results show that several factors, such as bullying, unauthorized access, drug and substance abuse, sexual harassment, banditry, and lack of proper lighting, have contributed to an unsafe school environment in the study area. The outcome of the findings may be due to the rise in violence and criminal activities in Kaduna State, in particular, and other places in Nigeria. Our findings align with previous studies. For instance, Egbochuku's (2007) survey reveals that almost four in five pupils (78 percent) have reported being bullied by their peers in school, and 85 percent of the pupils acknowledge bullying their colleagues. The finding also echoed the several bullying incidents, such as the incident at a high school in Akwa Ibom, where an eleven-year-old pupil was bullied by his seniors for allegedly bedwetting, leaving him with serious injuries (Asough). The prevalence rate of 84.2% of drug and substance abuse found in our study is similar to that of Ogunsola & Fatusi (2016), who reported that 65.7 percent and 66.0 percent of pupils from both rural and urban areas of Osun State had used illicit drugs or substances. Lawoyin et al. (2005) found that more than two-thirds (69.3%) of the surveyed secondary school students admitted they were taking different types of illicit drugs. In separate research, Erinosho et al. (2018) acknowledge the prevalence of sexual harassment in educational institutions, including primary, secondary, and tertiary. The scholars found that more than half (60%) of the surveyed students in a Nigerian university admitted that sexual harassment is common on the university campus. There are several reported cases where a teacher sexually abused his students or junior colleagues. In some cases, male pupils are caught abusing their female peers in classrooms, laboratories, toilets, etc. (Ihekoronye & Opara, 2021).

Measures adopted by schools to provide security to pupils and educators

The second objective of the study was to examine the safety measures adopted by schools in safeguarding pupils, teachers, and the school community. Findings show that the majority of schools in the study area lack effective safety measures. Two-thirds (72%) of the respondents were unaware of safety rules and regulations in their schools. This result is consistent with the argument put forth by Masekela et al. (2024), who posit that the absence of safety awareness among pupils, teachers, and other personnel can aggravate vulnerabilities in schools. Dewee et al. (2024) advised that if effectively

implemented, safety awareness initiatives in schools can enhance the safety of pupils and teachers. Furthermore, according to the responses, 86% noted the lack of infrastructure and safety features such as clear boundaries, fire extinguishers, CCTV cameras, gates, and good perimeter fences, among others, in schools in CLGA. Habib (2024) reported that out of the 5,474 primary and secondary schools in Nigeria, an alarming 2,851 lack the basic safety and preparedness measures. Speaking to newsmen in Abuja, the Commander of the National Safe School Response, Hameed Abodunrin, acknowledges the lack of security guards, walls, functional cameras, intruder alarm systems, and other basic security measures in schools across the country (Habib, 2024). He added that 70 percent of schools, including primary, secondary, and tertiary, are porous without adequate safety measures, exposing pupils, teachers, and school administrators to a high risk of violence and other criminal activities (Habib, 2024). These conditions expose pupils and teachers to threats such as fire outbreaks, kidnapping, and armed bandits' attacks, particularly in rural areas.

Challenges Faced by Schools in Safeguarding Pupils and Educators

The third goal of the study was to find out the factors that hinder schools in safeguarding pupils and staff. 95% of the respondents believe that schools in CLGA face numerous challenges in ensuring a safer school environment. The majority (93.0%) of the respondents identified inadequate funding for security measures, 92% identified a lack of training on safety measures, and 88% identified fear of reporting safety concerns to school management as the major challenges hindering safety in schools in the study area and other localities in Nigeria. The outcome of our study aligns with the views of Manning & Bucher (2013), who noted that inadequate funding is a major obstacle that prevents school administrators from safeguarding pupils, teachers, and the school community. Schools that fail to provide adequate security measures, such as good perimeter fences, gates, cameras, fire alarms, and security guards, are susceptible to violence and attack (Dewee, 2024). On the other hand, Aderinto (2010) states that insecurity has become a major challenge in ensuring the safety of pupils and teachers in Nigeria and other places. The criminal acts of armed bandits and other insurgents have crippled the effective functioning of schools, particularly in the northern part of the country (Mohammed et al., 2021).

Conclusion

In line with our findings, the study concluded that most of the school environments are not safe due to increasing violence and criminal activities in the CLGA. The study revealed that a significant proportion of the pupils are in constant fear of criminal victimization. The survey also revealed that bullying, trespassing, drug and substance abuse, sexual harassment, and insecurity are the main safety issues contributing to unsafe school environments in the area. Furthermore, the survey found that pupils and teachers are not aware of the school safety measures to safeguard them from threats or hazards. It can be concluded that these safety measures are ineffective.

Recommendations

The fourth objective of the study was to provide suggestions that can keep pupils and teachers safe in schools. To improve the safety of pupils and teachers, the study recommends the following:

1. Mass awareness campaign: Policymakers, schools, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and law enforcement agencies should collaborate and organize a mass awareness campaign to make pupils and teachers aware of school safety measures. Implementing anti-bullying and anti-drug programs in schools could also help in preventing and reducing the impact of bullying and drug abuse among pupils.

2. Reporting safety concerns: Most of the violence perpetrated on pupils and teachers is not reported due to numerous reasons. However, it is recommended that schools develop a means (such as hotlines, online platforms, boxes, etc.) where pupils can report security-related matters.

3. Safe school initiative: Schools should implement the National Policy on Safety, Security, and Violence-Free Schools in Nigeria (SSVFSN, 2021). This may include creating a security committee, conducting safety audits, and enforcing anti-violence policies.

4. Provision and maintenance of physical infrastructure: Policymakers should provide adequate physical security infrastructure, such as proper perimeter fences, secure gates, CCTV cameras, and trained security guards to protect pupils and teachers.

5. Personal safety and self-defense: There is a need for parents, teachers, and school administrators to teach pupils how to avoid dangerous places or situations, report security concerns, and protect themselves in school and outside of school.

6. Adequate funding: There is a need for policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels to allocate adequate funds for school safety initiatives. Schools should use this money to cover the training of security personnel, procurement of safety infrastructure, training of security guards, and awareness programs.

Implications

Hopefully, the study could contribute to the improvement of the safety and security of pupils and teachers in CLGA. Policymakers may use the findings on school safety challenges to develop and implement security and safety policies. School administrators and teachers can also use the findings on the factors contributing to an unsafe school environment to introduce safety education and awareness programs and monitor hotspots within schools. Additionally, pupils could also benefit from the study outcomes, because they will be encouraged to practice personal safety and self-defense and report security-related issues to school management.

Future research

Lastly, the study recommends that future studies may examine the efficiency and effectiveness of school safety awareness programs in reducing bullying, sexual harassment, drug abuse, or violent

attacks in secondary schools. Researchers may also examine the impact of an unsafe school environment on the academic performance of tertiary institution students.

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