
Assessment of the Role of Religious Institutions in Enhancing Secondary School Security in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study investigated the role of religious institutions in enhancing secondary school security in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto State, Nigeria. Two research objectives were formulated to guide the study: to assess the role of religious institutions in enhancing secondary school security and to also examine the constraints to the role of religious institutions in enhancing secondary school security in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto State, Nigeria. The study was motivated by the increasing cases of insecurity in the education sector and the need to find a lasting solution by all stakeholders, including religious institutions. Qualitative research method was adopted for the study and interview was used in collecting data. The population of the study comprises school administrators, religious Subjects' teachers and religious leaders, where nine participants were selected using snowball sampling technique. The data were analysed using thematic analysis and the findings revealed that religious institutions play a spiritual supportive role, advisory role in government and private owned schools and play a huge and direct role in schools owned by them by purchasing of security gadgets, construction of school fence, liaising with security agents, among others. It was also revealed that among the constraints in enhancing secondary school security are: financial, political, legal, among others. Based on these findings, the study concludes that religious institutions play a great role in enhancing secondary school security in schools owned by them but play a supportive and advisory role in other schools due to some constraints and therefore recommends that government should provide constitutional framework to support religious institutions in order to enable them carry out some roles in enhancing security of schools and that of the society in general.*

Key words: *Social Safety Theory, Role, Religious Institutions, School Security, Religious Leaders*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Security challenges and school safety has become a very great issue of concern in our education system in Nigeria. Many schools were burnt and destroyed, teachers were killed and school children were kidnapped across Nigeria, especially the Northern part of the Country. The attack on schools became rampant and global concern with the activities of the Boko Haram on the night of 14–15 April 2014 where 276 female students were kidnapped by the terrorist group, Boko



Haram from the Government Girls Secondary School at the town of Chibok in

Borno State, Nigeria (Omeni, 2021). Among the attacks is the one that happened in February, 2021 where about 300 students were kidnapped in Zamfara State (BBC, 2021a). And also again in the North Western Nigeria there was another one which involved the kidnapping of at least 58 students of Federal Government College, Yauri, Kebbi State (BBC, 2021b).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework discusses on religious institutions, school security and role of religious institutions as follows:

Religious Institutions

The term religion has been defined by many scholars in different perspective, and therefore, there is no single definition of the concept of religion. According to Ugwu as cited in Inuwa (2010), who said religion as perception of the infinite or the supersensitive reality and defined religion as a faith and practices involving the relationship between mankind and what are regarded as sacred. It generally includes belief in supernatural and a code of ethical behavior. “Religious institutions are churches, temples, mosques and other places of worship and institutions that exist to support and manage the practices of a specific set of religious beliefs” (UNESCO, 2021).

School Security

According to Goodwin (2021), School security encompasses all measures taken to combat threats to people and property in education environments. Furthermore, one term connected to school security is school safety, which is defined as the sheltering of students from violence and bullying, as well as exposure to harmful elements such as drugs and gang activity. Along with other public places, schools are at risk for invasion from outside as well as attacks from students or faculty because of the high traffic of potential assailants and availability of victims (Goodwin, 2021). In addition, Goodwin (2021), further explained that the scope of school security threat is not limited to physical attacks by external forces. School security has both internal and external security threats. Internal threats such as bullying, attacks from students, gang activity, cultism, sexual harassment, environmental threats, curriculum contents threat, corporal punishment, food security, health security, water security, etc.

Shaw (2004), has identified the following as some of the global school safety threats:

1. Accidents and injury;
2. Theft;
3. Bullying and intimidation;
4. Intrusion;
5. Sexual and racial harassment and intimidation;
6. Fear of victimization;
7. Student violence and aggression against students/staff;
8. Vandalism and arson;
9. Group mobbing, extortion, taxing, drug/gang activities;
10. Violence by teachers/staff;
11. Violence by parents against students/staff.

Role of Religious Institutions

Wilson (2019), is of the view that religious institutions through the religious leaders can greatly influence the numerous youths who can be enthusiastically recruited as attackers and who are in doubt of the direction to follow and the rationalization of their actions. He further said Religious leaders embark upon advocacy against the recruitment of children and the youth for terrorist activities. Babalola and Onapajo (2018), stated that the Religious leaders who are the representatives of the religious institutions are important stakeholders in school security because they are trusted by the people. They further explained that religious institutions shape the views and actions of their members, increase awareness on various political and social issues, and challenge their followers, which includes students, teachers, school administrators, religious teachers in schools and of course education policy makers, who are the political



leaders. According to Babalola and Onapajo (2018), Religious leaders represent their religious groups at peace building meetings and are involved in peace work in their respective congregations and communities. Role of religious leaders and institutions in bringing relief and support efforts in Nigeria. For instance, churches have been involved in distributing first aid, household goods, medication, food and clothing to displaced persons (Babalola & Onapajo, 2018). It has also been said that Church leaders have also provided counseling to victims who have lost relatives, houses, and businesses (Babalola & Onapajo, 2018). It was also mentioned that Church premises have been used as camps while others have donated resources to various local NGOs (Babalola & Onapajo, 2018). Congregations have also provided psychological, spiritual and material support to victims of violence, particularly to fellow members and similarly, mosques have distributed clothing, provided sanctuary for displaced people, distributed food and other relief materials, paid for the medical treatment of victims, used sermons to pacify victims of violence, and carried out search and rescue missions (Babalola & Onapajo, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

Social safety Theory was adopted for this study as the theory established the need for human beings to develop and maintain friendly social bonds which forms the basis for the study.

Laboratory for Stress Assessment and Research (LSAR) (2021), has described social safety theory as follows:

Social Safety Theory hypothesizes that developing and maintaining friendly social bonds is a fundamental organizing principle of human behavior and that threats to social safety are a critical feature of psychological stressors that increase risk for disease. LSAR (2021), further states that Central to this formulation is the fact that the human brain and immune system are principally designed to keep the body biologically safe, which they do by continually monitoring and responding to social, physical, and microbial threats in the environment. LSAR (2021), argued that because situations involving social conflict, isolation, devaluation, rejection, and exclusion historically increased risk for physical injury and infection, anticipatory neural-immune reactivity to social threat was likely highly conserved. LSAR (2021), also said that this neurocognitive and immunologic ability for humans to symbolically represent and respond to potentially dangerous social situations is ultimately critical for survival. When sustained, however, this multilevel biological threat response can increase individuals' risk for several inflammation-related disease conditions that dominate present- day morbidity and mortality LSAR (2021).

This theory is still relevant in present day situation as many rescued school children went through some psychological trauma which usually requires psychological rehabilitations.

Review of Related Empirical Literature

In his study, Manga (2020) investigated the relationship between management of school security equipment and sustainable development of tertiary educational institutions in Kebbi State in which 150 participants were purposefully selected from Management Staff and Security Staff of the selected institutions. Descriptive survey design was adopted and validated instruments with reliability index of .82 were used to collect data. It was found that the level of adequacy of school security equipment was rated low but has a significant relationship with sustainable development of tertiary educational institutions in Kebbi State.

In another study carried out by Nwobodo and Udenbunu (2017), on the Appraisal of Security and Safety Management in Public Secondary Schools in Enugu State. A Sample of 351 respondents were selected using multi stage sampling technique. The study employed



descriptive survey method using questionnaire and checklist in data collection and analysed the data using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The research found that security devices for enhancing school security were not generally available.

In a recent study conducted by Sabo, Inuwa, Sanchi, and Alhassan (2021), on the perception of the Role of Education Stakeholders in Promoting Secondary Schools Safety in Zuru Local Government Area of Kebbi State, Nigeria in which descriptive method was adopted and data were collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods. A sample of 258 students, 169 teachers, 80 parents and 15 zonal education board members were selected using proportionate sampling technique. The data collected were analysed using SPSS and content analysis for the qualitative data. The results of the study revealed among others, that educational stakeholders contributed substantially in promoting schools safety in the study area through financial contributions to erect school fence, provision of school facilities and their maintenance, addressing the issue of overcrowded classes, provision of Guidance and Counseling services and first aid boxes etc.

In another recent study conducted by Sabo, Sanchi, Ndidi, Dangari, and Alhassan, (2021), on the Analysis of the Constraints Influencing Secondary Schools Safety in Zuru Local Government Area of Kebbi State, Nigeria, in which descriptive method was adopted and data were collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods. A sample of 258 students, 169 teachers, 80 parents and 15 zonal education board members were selected using proportionate sampling technique. The data collected were analysed using SPSS and content analysis for the qualitative data. The finding revealed that there were lack of fences or collapsed fences and financial constraint. Other challenges to secondary schools safety included bullying, drug abuse, vandalism, truancy, lack of tables and chairs, lack of Guidance and Counseling Units, lack of first aid boxes and lack proper maintenance of school facilities.

Statement of problem

The Nigerian education sector has been bedeviled with numerous cases of bullying, cultism, students' riots, teachers' sexual harassment of students, use of corporal punishment, students attacking of teachers, food insecurity among others which have left many students traumatized and even dropped out of school. Many school children were attacked and kidnapped in Chibok, Borno State, Dapchi, Yobe State, Jangebe, Zamfara State, Kankara, Katsina State, Birnin Yauri, Kebbi State, Lagos State, Kaduna State among other several school attacks across the nation. Schools were closed for more than a year in some parts of Borno State due to the activities of the Boko Haram.

In view of the increasing cases of insecurity in the education sector and the need to find a lasting solution by all stakeholders, this study is determined to assess the role played by religious institutions in enhancing secondary school security in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study is to assess the role of religious institutions in enhancing secondary school security in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto State, Nigeria

In lieu of this, the following research objectives were addressed:

1. To assess the role of religious institutions in enhancing secondary school security in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto State, Nigeria.
2. To examine the constraints to the role of religious institutions in enhancing secondary school security in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto State, Nigeria.



Research Questions

In line with the specific objectives, the following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the role of religious institutions in enhancing secondary school security in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto State, Nigeria?
2. What are the constraints to the role of religious institutions in enhancing secondary school security in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto State, Nigeria?

2. METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for the study was qualitative research method using interview for data collection. This study adopted the qualitative research method because primary data is the most suitable for the study and also qualitative design is always original in its nature and this study tries to be uniquely original as it makes its participants to be selected on the basis of reality and relevance and not a prearranged condition (Bengtsson, 2016; Bryman, Teevan & Bell, 2009 as cited in Inuwa, 2021).

The population of the study is 13 participants selected from religious subjects' teachers, school administrators and religious leaders (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, & Nigam, 2013 as cited in Inuwa, 2021). Snowball sampling technique was used in the selection of the sample. This is because it was difficult to identify units to include in the sample, because there is no obvious list of the population of the study due to bureaucratic problem in obtaining data from government agencies and also limited time (Sharma, 2017). The sample of the study consist of 3 religious subjects' teachers, 3 school administrators, 3 religious leaders. The researcher has selected the above sample because in qualitative data, up to the number of five participants can be enough for a particular study especially when data saturation is involve in the reporting. (Guest, Bounce, & Johnson, 2006; and Mason, 2010 as cited in Inuwa 2021). All the data collected from key informants were edited on a continuous basis to ensure completeness. Data collected were put into meaningful and exhaustive categories. Thematic analysis was the main method of analyzing the data collected. Data collected were transcribed, inductively coded and categorized in themes according to emerging variables from each question in line with the research objective and questions. In qualitative research, "the researcher is the instrument" (Patton, 2001, p. 14, in Golafshani, 2003, p. 601). Therefore, "The focus, trends of the responses were observed on their natural relationship to the attitudinal and behavioural responses for the study credibility and dependability" (Inuwa, 2021, p. 5)

3. RESULTS

The data collected were categorized in themes according to emerging variables from each question in line with the research objective and questions as follows:

Research question one: What are the role of religious institutions in enhancing secondary school security in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto State, Nigeria? The below were collected from the field work 2021:

Principal's A response on the role: That basically religious leaders are invited from time to time to preach on chosen topic by the school for the students which helps in moral development of the students and in turn help in reducing crimes in schools.



Principal's B response on the role: That religious institutions play a huge role firstly by establishing schools, purchasing of security gadgets, construction of school fence, liaising with security agents, providing security men, making school security policies, ensuring adherence to the security policies, procurement of fire extinguishers, provision of security tips to staff and students, provision of clean water, ensuring good hygiene, and prohibiting school bullying.

Principal's C response on role: That at times they invite religious leaders whenever a student has been attacked by evil spirit (Jinnu). And also invite religious leaders for symposia.

The results from principals' responses in the study showed that religious institutions play an advisory role and also contributes in the moral development of all the education stakeholders. They also contributes directly in enhancing school security through purchasing of security gadgets, construction of school fence, liaising with security agents, providing security men, making school security policies, ensuring adherence to the security policies, procurement of fire extinguishers, provision of security tips to staff and students, provision of clean water, ensuring good hygiene, and prohibiting school bullying in schools owned by the religious institutions

Teacher's A response on role: There is no direct help from religious institutions to school, but at times they (religious leaders) call on government during their sermon to carry out its primary function of protecting lives and properties. They have not contacted any religious institutions for collaboration in teaching religion in school.

Teacher's B response on role: Religious institutions are deeply involved in school security because the school is owned by religious institution.

Teacher's C response on role: That they learn from the religious leaders before teaching their students.

The results of the study here showed that religious institutions guide teachers and preach to all school stakeholders.

Religious leader's A response on role: They visit schools on invitations.

Religious leader's B response on role: They play direct role in school security only in their own schools.

Religious leader's C response on role: They advise government and school heads on security challenges and provide everything in their own schools in terms of security.

The results of the study showed that religious institutions preach and also provide advice to education stakeholders. They also play direct role in schools owned by those institutions.

Research question two: What are the constraints to the role of religious institutions in enhancing secondary school security in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto State, Nigeria?

The below were collected from the field work 2021:

Principal's A response on constraints: That they are not allowed to receive any support without reporting to ministry or Board.

Principal's B response on constraints: Financial problem and difficulty in decision making.



Principal's C response on constraints: That differences in political interest is one of the challenges.

The finding of the study has revealed that there are challenges preventing religious institutions from contributing in enhancing secondary school security in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto State, Nigeria, according principals and these challenges are financial problems, political differences and bureaucratic bottleneck.

Teacher's A response on constraints: That because is government's responsibility and not religious institutions.

Teacher's B response on constraints: That because of corruption among people.

Teacher's C response on constraints: No idea.

The finding of the study has also revealed that there are challenges preventing religious institutions from contributing in enhancing secondary school security in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto State, Nigeria. And these challenges are corruption people's attitudes.

Religious leader's A response on constraints: That, there is no enough money and besides it is government's responsibility.

Religious leader's B response on constraints: Financial constraint, no legal back up for religious leaders' role and bureaucratic bottleneck.

Religious leader's C response on constraints: People's nonchalant attitudes and issue of money, lack of cooperation between schools and the religious institutions, environmental hostility/ cultural differences and religious intolerance.

The finding of the study has also revealed that there are challenges preventing religious institutions from contributing in enhancing secondary school security in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto State, Nigeria. And these challenges are financial problems, cultural and political differences, religious intolerance, bureaucratic bottleneck, nonchalant attitudes of people, lack of legal framework that clearly defined the role of religious institutions in the society and corruption.

4. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Based on the result of the study, the following major findings were summarized as follows:

1. Religious institutions contributes in enhancing secondary school security comprehensively only in schools owned by those institutions.
2. Religious institutions contributes in enhancing school security generally by helping in the moral development of all education stakeholders, play an advisory and spiritual supportive services role.
3. Religious institutions are prevented from playing a great role in school security due to the following constraints: financial problems, political and cultural differences, religious intolerance among people, bureaucratic bottleneck, nonchalant attitudes of people, lack of legal framework that clearly defined the role of religious institutions in the society and corruption.



5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study assesses the role of religious institutions in enhancing secondary school security in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto State, Nigeria and the finding of research question one has revealed that religious institutions contribute in enhancing secondary school security comprehensively only in schools owned by those institutions and also contribute generally by helping in the moral development of all education stakeholders, playing an advisory and supportive service role. This finding is in line with Sabo, Inuwa, Sanchi, and Alhassan, (2021), in their study of the perception of the Role of Education Stakeholders in Promoting Secondary Schools Safety in Zuru Local Government Area of Kebbi State, Nigeria, in which the results of the study also revealed among others, that educational stakeholders contributed substantially in promoting schools' safety in the study area through financial contributions to erect school fence, provision of school facilities and their maintenance, addressing the issue of overcrowded classes, provision of Guidance and Counseling services and first aid boxes etc.

The finding of research question two has revealed that religious institutions are prevented from contributing adequately in enhancing secondary school security in Sokoto Metropolis due to the following constraints: financial problems, political and cultural differences, religious intolerance among people, bureaucratic bottleneck, nonchalant attitudes of people, lack of legal framework that clearly defined the role of religious institutions in the society and corruption. This finding is in agreement with the finding of Sabo, Sanchi, Ndidi, Dangari, and Alhassan, (2021), in their study of the Analysis of the Constraints Influencing Secondary Schools Safety in Zuru Local Government Area of Kebbi State, Nigeria in which it was revealed that there were lack of fences or collapsed fences and financial constraints among others.

6. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that religious institutions have a great role to play in contributing to the enhancement of school security but they are faced with some difficulties preventing them from contributing adequately.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and the conclusion of the study, the following were recommended:

1. Government should provide constitutional framework to support religious institutions in order to enable them carry out some roles effectively in enhancing security of schools and that of the society in general.
2. Government should regulate religious teaching by religious leaders through supervision of formal and informal religious schools/centres and activities in order to reduce religious extremism.
3. Religious institutions should collaborate with government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in order to access fund to contribute in enhancing school security.
4. Government should come up with sustainable policies that will enhance religious tolerance among people.

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