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EDUCATIONAL CONTINUITY FRAMEWORKS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: MANAGING INSECURITY AND LEARNING RISKS IN OYO STATE PUBLIC SCHOOLS, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the structural and operational conditions shaping educational continuity in Oyo State public schools, south-western Nigeria, within a comparative Sub-Saharan African frame. Prompted by the 15 May 2026 abduction of 39 pupils and seven teachers from three schools in Oriire Local Government Area, it adopted a mixed-methods convergent parallel design, obtaining valid questionnaire data from 1,207 respondents across all 33 Local Government Areas, complemented by 32 interviews. Respondents reported that 67.4% of their schools had no perimeter fencing, 74.2% had no functional security personnel, and 58.3% had experienced theft or vandalism. Respondents from fully fenced schools reported a mean attendance of 84.2% against 63.1% where there was no fencing, and schools with functional security personnel recorded 64% fewer learning disruptions per term than those without. Drawing on risk-perception theory and the Education Resilience Approaches framework, the study proposes a four-dimensional Educational Continuity Model (risk mitigation, asset protection, community partnership, and aligned systemic support); its community-partnership dimension is theoretically derived and was not tested directly. The study argues for contextually grounded policy that builds on community-based mechanisms alongside state provision.

Keywords: Educational continuity, School insecurity, Sub-Saharan Africa, Learning risks, School-community partnership

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Introduction

Access to safe, uninterrupted schooling is affirmed by Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and Sustainable Development Goal 4. Across Sub-Saharan Africa, however, this right is eroded by attacks on educational facilities, chronic physical neglect, displacement, and governance arrangements in which security is marginal to educational planning. The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA, 2022) documents attacks on education across the region, including in the Sahel, Cameroon, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria, and the Central Sahel alone recorded more than 85 attacks on education between January and July 2020 (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

Nigeria holds an instructive position. The 2014 Chibok abductions catalyzed the Safe Schools Initiative, and the National Plan on Financing Safe Schools (2023–2026) committed ₦144.8 billion to protect schools (HRW, 2024). Yet between March 2024 and May 2026, at least 603 students and teachers were reported abducted in seven mass abductions across Kaduna, Sokoto, Kebbi, Niger, Kogi, Borno and Oyo States ("Over 600 Pupils, Teachers Abducted," 2026). Implementation has been hindered by insecurity, inadequate funding, weak school-level safety measures and mismanagement of funds (Ibrahim & Ibrahim, 2025).

Oyo State, home to Nigeria's oldest university, had long been regarded as comparatively secure. On 15 May 2026, armed men attacked three schools in Oriire Local Government Area and abducted 39 pupils and seven teachers; at least one educator died, and the victims were freed after 56 days in captivity (Nairametrics, 2026; The ICIR, 2026). The ICIR (2026) describes it as the first prolonged school abduction in the South-West. It followed recurrent vandalism of, and attacks on, Oyo schools, and prompted a strike by public school teachers. Scholarship on educational crisis response has often relied on externally developed frameworks, whereas African-centred work argues that responses should be grounded in local institutions and knowledge systems (Abdi, 2012; Brock-Utne, 2000). This study investigates the structural and operational determinants of educational continuity in Oyo State public schools, situating its analysis within comparative Sub-Saharan African evidence.

Statement of the Problem

School security in Oyo State is weak at three levels. At the infrastructure level, most schools lack perimeter fencing and basic protective facilities. At the human-resource level, trained security personnel and written response protocols are largely absent. At the systemic level, no formal school-community security governance exists, so closure becomes the default response. These conditions threaten the right to education and the returns on public investment in schools.

Research Objectives

The study aimed to:

1. assess the state of school security infrastructure, personnel and incidents in Oyo State public schools, and

2. compare student attendance and learning disruptions across schools with and without perimeter fencing and functional security personnel.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the prevailing state of security infrastructure in Oyo State public schools?
2. What is the state of security personnel, protocols and reported incidents?
3. How do reported attendance and learning disruptions differ by fencing and by functional security personnel?

Conceptual Review

Educational continuity denotes a system's capacity to preserve meaningful learning, learner engagement and academic progress despite emergency or security disruption; it extends beyond keeping buildings open to psychosocial coherence and alternative delivery when schools are inaccessible. Insecurity in educational settings covers the physical, psychological and structural hazards facing learners, educators and school property; in Nigeria it has spread from a north-eastern insurgency to a multi-regional pattern involving armed groups, bandit networks and criminal gangs ("Over 600 Pupils, Teachers Abducted," 2026). Learning risks are the factors that obstruct educational outcomes; this study groups them as direct (physical harm, trauma), indirect (closures, attendance decline, teacher attrition) and systemic (resource diversion, eroded public trust).

Educational Disruption in Sub-Saharan Africa

Comparative evidence shows schools being targeted deliberately rather than incidentally. In the Central Sahel, armed groups have burned and looted schools and threatened, abducted or killed teachers (HRW, 2020), and GCPEA (2022) reports comparable patterns elsewhere in the region. Common structural antecedents include fragile institutions, under-investment in school safety and weak teacher welfare. The African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016–2025 calls for safe, conducive learning environments and for peace education and conflict prevention (African Union, 2016), which implies that continuity must be planned rather than assumed.

African-Centred Models and School-Community Partnerships

Decolonial scholarship criticizes crisis-response tools developed outside the continent and argues for centring African knowledge systems and institutions (Abdi, 2012; Brock-Utne, 2000). Two lenses are relevant. The 4Rs framework (redistribution, recognition, representation and reconciliation) foregrounds structural injustice, rather than physical security alone, as a root of educational risk in conflict-affected contexts (Novelli et al., 2017). Ubuntu, a communal ethic of mutual responsibility (Mbiti, 1969; Metz, 2011), supports the view that child protection is a shared community obligation. The World Bank's Education Resilience Approaches (ERA) similarly treat school-community relations as an asset for recovery from

adversity (Reyes, 2013). In Oyo State, a union–security memorandum of understanding is reported to cover two Ibadan "red zones".

Conceptual Framework

The framework (Figure 1) maps how school insecurity generates learning risks and which institutional conditions restore continuity. Insecurity inputs in Oyo State include armed attacks and kidnapping, vandalism and theft, intra-community and cult-related violence, neglect of the school environment, and governance gaps. The proposed response has four dimensions: risk mitigation through security infrastructure; asset protection through trained personnel and community surveillance; community partnership through indigenous governance institutions; and aligned systemic support across federal, state and LGA levels. The framework treats community-based governance as primary rather than supplementary to state-centred approaches.

Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework on Educational Continuity in Sub-Saharan African Contexts*

INSECURITY INPUTS (Sub-Saharan Africa context) Armed attacks | Kidnapping | Vandalism | Cultism | Community conflicts | State fragility
▼ LEARNING RISKS ▼ Direct: physical harm | psychosocial trauma | displacement Indirect: school closures | attendance collapse | teacher attrition Systemic: policy failure | resource diversion | governance gaps
FOUR-DIMENSIONAL EDUCATIONAL CONTINUITY RESPONSE (1) Risk mitigation | (2) Asset protection | (3) Community partnership | (4) Aligned systemic support
▼ OUTCOME: EDUCATIONAL CONTINUITY ▼ Sustained enrolment | improved attendance | teacher retention | quality learning | psychosocial well-being

Source: Researchers' Conceptual Synthesis, 2026.

Theoretical Framework

Risk-perception theory distinguishes actual risk, the objectively verifiable likelihood and severity of harm, from perceived risk, the subjective judgment of danger held by those exposed (Slovic, 1987). In Oyo State, actual risk is evidenced by reported vandalism, intrusion and the Oriire abductions, while perceived risk shapes whether parents send children to school and teachers remain in post. The study's working proposition, consistent with this perspective, is that visible, credible security investment can lower both actual and perceived risk and so restore the conditions for continuity. The ERA framework complements it by directing attention to assets, school-community relations and education policy that physical infrastructure alone cannot supply (Reyes, 2013).

Methodology

Research Design and Scope

The study used a mixed-methods convergent parallel design in which survey and interview data were collected concurrently, analyzed separately and integrated at interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). It covered all 33 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Oyo State, which has 4,523 public primary, 1,043 junior

secondary and 346 senior secondary schools according to Oyo SUBEB records. Oyo State was selected for its recent, documented school security failure and its comparability with contexts experiencing the geographic spread of school-targeted violence.

Population, Sampling and Instruments

The population comprised public school teachers and head teachers, PTA executive members and SUBEB/TESCOM officials, estimated at 45,051 people. Yamane's (1967) formula, $n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$, gave a minimum sample of 396 at a 5% margin of error. The target was raised to 1,200, about three times the minimum, to offset non-response, and distributed by proportionate stratified sampling across LGAs, school levels and respondent categories.

Two instruments were developed. The 78-item, School Security and Educational Continuity Questionnaire (SSEC-Q), covering security infrastructure, personnel deployment, community engagement, continuity outcomes and psychosocial indicators, and an in-depth interview protocol.

Validity, Reliability and Data Collection

Three specialists (two in educational management from Lead City University, Ibadan, and one in research methodology) reviewed content and face validity; items with a content validity index below 0.78 were revised or removed. Exploratory factor analysis returned a coherent four-factor solution with loadings of 0.62 to 0.89. A pilot with 80 Ogun State teachers gave Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.87 (security infrastructure), 0.84 (personnel), 0.79 (community engagement), 0.88 (educational continuity) and 0.91 overall.

Twelve trained postgraduate research assistants from Lead City University assisted to collect data over three weeks in May–June 2026. Thirty-two in-depth interviews (12 principals, 10 PTA chairs, 6 SUBEB officials and 4 NUT representatives) were audio-recorded with informed consent and transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed in IBM SPSS version 27 using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations) and comparison of group means. Descriptive statistics addressed research questions 1 and 2, and group comparisons addressed research question 3. Interview data underwent thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases, and the two strands were integrated through joint display analysis at the interpretive stage.

Table 1: *Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 1,207)*

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	468	38.8%
	Female	739	61.2%
Age	Under 30	156	12.9%
	30–39	421	34.9%
	40–49	389	32.2%
	50 and above	241	20.0%

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Role	Teacher	862	71.4%
	Principal/Head Teacher	118	9.8%
	PTA Member	186	15.4%
	SUBEB/TESCOM Official	41	3.4%
School Level	Primary (1–6)	654	54.2%
	Junior Secondary	367	30.4%
	Senior Secondary	186	15.4%
School Location	Urban	521	43.2%
	Semi-urban	403	33.4%
	Rural	283	23.4%
Years of Experience	Less than 5	198	16.4%
	5–10	356	29.5%
	11–20	412	34.1%
	Over 20	241	20.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Out of 1,247 questionnaires administered, 1,207 valid returns were received (96.8%). Table 1 summarizes the respondents, most of whom were female (61.2%), teachers (71.4%) and from primary schools (54.2%).

Security Infrastructure, Personnel and Incidents

Only 11.8% of respondents reported complete perimeter fencing and 67.4% reported none (Table 2). CCTV (97.1%) and alarm systems (98.1%) were almost universally absent, as were emergency exit signs (89.8%). These conditions fall well short of the basic standards set out in national safe-school guidance (Federal Ministry of Education, 2021).

Table 2: *Security Infrastructure Status (N = 1,207)*

Infrastructure Item	Present	Partially Present	Absent
Perimeter fencing	143 (11.8%)	251 (20.8%)	813 (67.4%)
Functional school gate	298 (24.7%)	312 (25.8%)	597 (49.5%)
Secure entry control	87 (7.2%)	156 (12.9%)	964 (79.9%)
Emergency exit signs	34 (2.8%)	89 (7.4%)	1,084 (89.8%)
Functional lighting	167 (13.8%)	298 (24.7%)	742 (61.5%)
Communication system	89 (7.4%)	134 (11.1%)	984 (81.5%)
Fire extinguisher	56 (4.6%)	78 (6.5%)	1,073 (88.9%)
First aid kit	234 (19.4%)	267 (22.1%)	706 (58.5%)
CCTV camera	12 (1.0%)	23 (1.9%)	1,172 (97.1%)
Security alarm system	8 (0.7%)	15 (1.2%)	1,184 (98.1%)

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Personnel and protocols were similarly thin (Table 3): 67.9% reported no day guard, 89.7% no night guard and 92.6% no trained security professional, while written protocols (5.6%) and emergency response plans (6.5%) were rare. Theft or vandalism was reported by 58.3% of respondents and unauthorized entry by 48.8% (Table 4).

Table 3: *Security Personnel Status (N = 1,207)*

Personnel Item	Yes	No
Day guard present	387 (32.1%)	820 (67.9%)
Night guard present	124 (10.3%)	1,083 (89.7%)
Trained security professional	89 (7.4%)	1,118 (92.6%)
Written security protocols	67 (5.6%)	1,140 (94.4%)
Incident reporting system	123 (10.2%)	1,084 (89.8%)
Security orientation for teachers	156 (12.9%)	1,051 (87.1%)
Emergency response plan	78 (6.5%)	1,129 (93.5%)
Police station linkage	234 (19.4%)	973 (80.6%)

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 4: *Respondent-Reported Security Incidents (N = 1,207)*

Incident Type	Respondents Reporting	Frequency Range
Theft/vandalism	704 (58.3%)	1–4 incidents
Unauthorized entry/intrusion	589 (48.8%)	1–12 incidents
Physical threat to staff	234 (19.4%)	1–2 incidents
Student abduction attempt	67 (5.6%)	1 incident
Successful abduction	12 (1.0%)	1 incident (Oriire LGA)
School closure due to threat	156 (12.9%)	1–5 days

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Fencing, Personnel and Learning Outcomes

Fencing and attendance

Respondents from schools with fully enclosed perimeters (n = 143) reported a mean attendance of 84.2%, against 63.1% for those from schools with no fencing (n = 813), a difference of 21.1 percentage points. This is a descriptive comparison and was not tested for statistical significance.

Security personnel and learning disruptions

Respondents from schools with functional security personnel (n = 312) reported a mean of 1.34 learning disruptions per term (*SD* = 0.87), against 3.72 (*SD* = 1.43) for those from schools without (n = 895), which is 64% fewer disruptions (Table 5). This comparison is descriptive and was not tested for statistical significance.

Table 5: *Learning Disruptions per Term by Security Personnel Status*

Group	N	Mean	SD
With functional security personnel	312	1.34	0.87
Without security personnel	895	3.72	1.43

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Qualitative Corroboration

Interview accounts were consistent with these patterns. A principal in Ibadan South-West LGA whose school had a trained guard and a police liaison arrangement reported that break-ins had ceased since the protocol was introduced, with teachers arriving more confidently and parents more willing to enroll children (Principal-017). A teacher in Ogbomoso South described a school open to intruders at night, with repeated equipment losses and colleagues seeking transfers out of fear (Teacher-041).

Discussion of Findings

Infrastructure deficits

Two-thirds of respondents reported no perimeter fencing and nearly all reported no electronic surveillance. The pattern is not confined to Oyo State: according to the National Plan on Financing Safe Schools, more than 42,000 primary and secondary schools in northern Nigeria lacked perimeter fencing (Najimdeen, 2026). Occupational health and safety is likewise neglected in schools across developing countries because of insufficient legislation, regulation and policy (Rielander et al., 2024), which points to a governance problem rather than a local anomaly.

Fencing, personnel and continuity

The higher reported attendance in fenced schools, and the lower disruption in schools with functional personnel, are consistent with the proposition that visible, credible security investment lowers both actual and perceived risk (Slovic, 1987). Neither pattern establishes causation. Fenced schools may also be better resourced or more urban, and the 21.1-point attendance gap may partly reflect heightened parental risk perception after the Oriire abductions; the cross-sectional design cannot separate these explanations.

Community partnerships and teachers

The study did not test community-partnership effects, so that dimension of the model remains a proposition. Two signals justify testing it as ERA treats school-community relations as an asset for resilience (Reyes, 2013), and a security memorandum of understanding is reported in parts of Ibadan. Teacher-041's account of colleagues seeking transfers, and the teachers' strike that followed Oriire (The ICIR, 2026), indicate that teacher retention is a further continuity risk requiring dedicated study.

Conclusion

Functional security personnel are associated with markedly fewer learning disruptions, and fenced schools report higher attendance, in Oyo State public schools, yet most schools have neither. Together with the Oriire abductions, these findings indicate a structural gap between Nigeria's safe-schools' commitments and conditions in schools. This Educational Continuity Model offers a contextually grounded basis for

policy, with its community-partnership and systemic-support dimensions now needing empirical testing.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Oyo State Government should declare school security a state emergency and ring-fence a dedicated budget, targeting 100% perimeter fencing within three years, starting with the highest-risk LGAs; recruit and deploy 2,000 professional school security officers through an Amotekun-administered School Security Corps, sequenced by evidence-based risk mapping; and create a School Security Monitoring Unit in the Ministry of Education to track incidents and conduct annual audits.
2. Federal Government should make the Safe Schools Initiative a mandatory standard, with compliance tied to UBEC fund releases, and formulate a National School Security Standard setting minimum infrastructure, personnel and emergency-response requirements.
3. School administrators should as a matter of urgency activate School Safety Committees with documented monthly meetings and links to LGA security structures, and develop emergency response plans that use the EIDU platform as a learning-continuity mechanism during closures.
4. UBEC and SUBEB require completed security audits for intervention project approval and allocate at least 15% of intervention funds to security infrastructure.

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