UNIJERPS
Unizik Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies VOL.15 (1);
https://unijerps.org
2021 Impact Factor: 5.641; 2020 Impact Factor: 5.355.
January-June, 2023
Indexing and Impact Factor URL: http://sjifactor.com/passport.php?id=21363

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS OF INSECURITY ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF UNDERGRADUATES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH EAST GEOPOLITICAL ZONE: IMPLICATIONS TO SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT
The study investigated challenges and solutions of insecurity on academic performance of undergraduates in public universities in south east geopolitical zone. Two research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 93,126 undergraduates comprising 42139 males and 50982 females. A sample of 600 students was involved in the study. The sample was composed using simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by researchers. The questionnaire was duly validated and its internal consistency was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha. Mean was used to analyze the data collected. The findings of the study revealed that insecurity makes learning environment unconducive, disrupts academic activities and make some students drop out of school. Insecurity affects students reading habit, many undergraduates do not go for night classes because of the fear of being killed and it deprives students from engaging in group discussion which affects their grade among others. This has reduced their academic engagements and performance in school. This led to the conclusion that insecurity hampers academic performance of undergraduates in public universities in south east geopolitical Zone. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that government and school management should provide competent security personnel at the school gate as well as the provision of CCTV in key areas on campus.

Keywords: Challenges; Solutions; Insecurity; Academic Performance; Undergraduates.

Introduction
Education is one of the most important investments a country can make in her future. Offor, Agbaenyi and Adirika (2019) defined education as the skillful process of bringing out the innate potentials of individuals in the society. When new babies are born into the society, they are taught their culture, that is, the ways of life of their people; as new babies are taught their culture, they are being socialized and educated. Education therefore is a powerful agent of change, improves health and livelihoods, contributes to social stability and drives long-term economic growth. Educational system in Nigeria is in three

levels namely, primary, secondary and tertiary or University levels. Nigeria's university awards bachelor's degree to undergraduates followed by a master's degree, and a doctorate degree to post graduate students. It is only undergraduates and post graduate students who passed all their courses are awarded those degrees. Hence, degrees are awarded to students based on their level of academic performance.

Academic performance is the outcome of students' academic engagements. Academic performance describes academic outcomes that indicate the extent to which a student has achieved their learning goals. Academic performance according to Anyamene (2021) may refer to completing educational benchmarks such as a bachelor's degree. Academic performance is often measured through examinations or continuous assessments. Academic performance is the extent to which a student or institution has achieved either short or long term educational goals. Performance may be measured through students' grade point average, whereas for institutions, performance may be measured through graduation rates. When students' academic performance is high, it shows that teaching and learning is effective and efficient, but in Nigeria universities, reverse seems to be the case. This was why Anyamene (2021) stated that the academic performance of students in Nigerian universities is below expectation and called for investigation into factors responsible for such ugly situation. Consequently, Nwankwo and Olu (2021), posited that there are so many variables responsible for poor academic performance of the students in Nigerian universities, but the most critical variables amongst them is the challenges of security in Nigeria, which appears to be beyond the control of the federal, state and local governments in different regions of Nigeria. This is why the issue of insecurity in Nigeria universities has become a major concern to all educational stakeholders.

Insecurity connotes different meanings such as: absence of safety; danger; hazard; uncertainty; lack of protection, and lack of safety (Ojo, 2018). Beland (2015), insecurity is "the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection." It refers to lack or inadequate freedom from danger. Achumba (2019) defines insecurity from two perspectives. Firstly, insecurity is the state of being open or subject to danger or threat of danger, where danger is the condition of being susceptible to harm or injury. Secondly insecurity is the state of being exposed to risk or anxiety, where anxiety is a vague unpleasant emotion that is experienced in anticipation of some misfortune. These definitions of insecurity underscore a major point that those affected by insecurity are not only uncertain or unaware of what would happen but they are also vulnerable to the threats and dangers when they occur.

The issue of insecurity is not new in Nigeria, has become the order of the day. No day passes without reports of kidnapping, banditry, robbery, murder, and wanton killings. More worrysome is the fact that in spite of huge resources being injected into

the defense sector, the Nigerian government seems unable to curb this menace that has bedeviled the well-being of the nation for a long time. The country is currently struggling with insecurity which cut across the six geo-political regions particularly in the north east, north central, northwest and south east regions. Residents in these regions now hardly sleep with their eyes closed while the government that is normally instructed with the security of their lives and properties seems to be helpless. Nigeria which is perceived as the giant of Africa has been witnessing unprecedented insecurity fueled by activities of Fulani herdsmen, BokoHaram, kidnapping, and banditry.

Boko Haram insurgency originated around 2000 under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf. The movement was claimed to be based on Islamic religious ideology that rejected western education and called for the establishment of an Islamic state in the country. Islamic clerics came out to dismiss publicly this new movement and it's teaching as a contradiction to mainstream Islamic belief. In 2009, a member of the group had a confrontation with security agent during a funeral procession of one of their members. Several of them lost their lives during the gun duel with the military, and their leader Mohammed Yusuf vowed to revenge. Following the incident, violent attacks were carried out in Maiduguri, the Borno state capital where about 700 to 800 lives were lost including members of the sect. These extra judicial killings triggered further violence which spread to other parts of the north as well as the state capital Abuja. The groups tactics keeps evolving to more sophisticated levels and the seal of attacks have escalated including a string of kidnapping such as that of a Serene member French family in northern Cameron in 2013 which made international headlines for which shekau claimed responsibility; abductions, the abduction of chibok girls in 2014,brutal killings of innocent civilians including children, the attack on a high school in Buni yadi in 2014 where 39 harmless school boys were mercilessly murdered and a series of suicide bombing which have become very rampant in recent times.

Niger Delta Militancy is a new wave of militancy that has taken over the Niger Delta region with the mutation of the militant umbrella group known as the movement for the emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) to the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA). The troubled Niger Delta region of the country made international headlines in the early 2008 when the oil producing region of the country was besieged with militancy. The NDA claimed responsibility for the recent pipeline vandalization and bombing of oil installation in the region rowing to cripple economic activities. The militants were into kidnapping also and ransom paid before they release their victims. Oil producing in Nigeria declined by 40% due to attack on key pipeline pushing oil output to 1.4 million from 2.2million barrels per day.

Farmers-Herders Conflict has led to an increase in the number of kidnapping and violent attacks. The clashes between

nomadic herdsmen and rural farmers have seen a rise in tension between the Fulani considered to be northerners and rural communities in the southern part of the country. Cattle rustling are criminal activity that has plagued the central part of Nigeria over decades. Nomadic grazers have been exposed to rural banditry while an increased number in violent attacks between farmers and herdsmen steaming from competition for increasingly scarce land and resources particularly grazing space and encroachment into farm lands are putting rural communities as well as pastoralists at high risk of violent attacks on a daily basis Ndukwe. (2021) posited that the group ecological and demographic pressure in the rural areas of Nigeria poses serious security concern not only for the lives of the people but also economic activities and the environment.

The activities Biafra Secessionist Movement have escalated in the recent years leading to violent clashes between the Nigerian security, forces and the militia group results in dozens of deaths. Well known for its underground radio presence in the south East, the indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB) established what it calls the Eastern security network (ESN) in Dec (2020)to act as a paramilitary force in the region to checkmate the activities of Fulani herdsmen. Based on their rhetoric and goals broadcast on social media; ESN declared that it will enforce a ban on grazing in the south East. Nigeria security forces and ESN have clashed in a series of skirmishes in 2021 that have resulted in the deaths of several civilians in what has become known as “Orlu crisis”.

Even though the Southeast zone of the country has somehow been spared from the total chaos of the northern part of the country, but it had also witnessed violence, banditry, herders and farmer violence, kidnapping for ransom. The construction on the roads and the heavy traffic on the road had before now made kidnapping a bit hazardous for bandits but as construction progresses, the finished part of the road without the usual traffic snarl has attracted kidnappers especially from the north. The northern kidnappers after selling their cows and handing the proceeds to the owners of the cows sometimes take to kidnapping which has proved more lucrative than herding cows (Nwankwo, 2021). Sometimes local boys who are unemployed join them or provide local intelligence for those coming from outside the area. Kidnapping is on the high side. Some students of University of Nigeria (UNN), have been kidnapped severally.

Without doubt, there has been a spike in recent weeks in the waves of insecurity in many parts of the five states that made up the South East (Obeta, 2019). This has been epitomised by the spate of killings, arson, and other forms of violent criminal activities in the region. Notable amongst these is the gruesome murder of Dr. Chike Akunyili, the widower of the former Director-General of National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Prof. Dora Akunyili, the destruction and burning of the country home of APC

Chieftain and Special Adviser to the Governor of Lagos State on Drainages and Water Resources, Mr. Joe Igbokwe; killings of civilians; burning of the office of the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) and Department of State Services (DSS) in Nnewi and the burning of police stations in all the five states in the southeast. The prevailing situation in the South East where citizens cannot go about their lawful businesses for fear of being killed or maimed by 'unknown gunmen'; amid sit-at-home orders. In the south east, unknown gun men, Fulani herdsmen, hoodlums, cultist pose serious security problem.

In recent time, the issue of insecurity is prevalent in universities in South east. There are robbery cases in the day and some students are kidnapped for ransom. Hoodlums that visit students periodically in their various lodges come before 9: pm in the night. They rob students of their Android phones, money, food items, laptops, television, and clothes among other properties of the students. Sometimes, the female students are robbed and raped. The hoodlums after raping them would tell them to start smiling. Some of the female raped students who refused to smile after being raped were shot to death. The male students who cohabit with their girlfriends were ordered by the hoodlums to have sex with their girlfriends before them. Some of them who refused to obey the order were shot dead.

Furthermore, unknown gun men and secrete cult activities taking place in daylights around school hostels and school environment expose the students to risk. Also students are not safe from the hours of 6:30 pm to 10: pm at night. Gun men visit them at night in their various lodges. These armed robbers rob from one room to another, raping students, taking their mobile phones, forcing students to withdraw all the money in their account with POS machine. Some robbers also collect food items among other material gratification from the students. Cults also heighten insecurity tension within and around school premises. There are also frequent gun shots in the days and nights because of the issue of secrete cult activities. They shoot and conquer vigilant group set up by government and students' union government. In some of universities, they easily kill members of the vigilant group, burn their vehicles and collect their guns. Even anti-cult induce fear in students, as they visit students at midnight, break their rooms, beat them up and destroy some students properties. Anti-cult group carrying out this harassment claimed that those students they harassed indulged in cyber-crime and drug abuse. The most painful part of this situation is that some students due to fear jump from three storey buildings in their various lodges; some break bones and die. Also, the school security more particularly anti-cult squad are not equipped to confront the robbers. So they come after three hours of robbery cases and start shooting in the air. Students are now forced to go inside their rooms before 9: pm and some of the students no longer go for night class. Some students are informants and they connive with hoodlums to rob their fellow students. So many students have been shut death including

security personnel in the institutions in south east. Cultists have been killing each other for months. Sometimes students die through stray bullet that was meant for another person.

It appears that they are scared of these hoodlums and all these issue of insecurity are likely to affect students' academic performance in school. Students' academic performance in Nigeria universities tends to be affected by security challenges (Odili, 2019). This could reduce the extent of students' involvement in academic activities in school. Some students who fall victim of insecurity might miss class for some time, the trauma some girls have from being raped can make them loose focus in school. Some girls die as a result of bleeding from rape. Insecurity makes the institutions of learning unconducive, disrupts academic calendar and make some students drop out of school. Insecurity affects students reading habit, many undergraduates do not go for night classes for their exams and it deprives students from engaging in group discussion which affects their grade. Insecurity discourages students from going to school for their private studies and some of them do not carry out assignments given to them. Also, there is untold hardship, untimely death among students and many of them do not go for tutorials again. All these could hinder academic engagements of the students; when students' academic engagement is low, there academic performance in school would definitely be below expectation.

Addressing the issue of insecurity in the South East universities, will entail identifying the real cause of it and the government changing its unwholesome attitude. There should be orientation and public enlightenment programmes for students on safety precautions both within and outside the campus; on the ills of cultism and drug abuse. Introduction of security awareness courses into the curricula of general studies is needed. The curricula and researches should reflect national development and security needs and aspirations while satisfying the highest global standards engage the mind and body of the students with games and recreation, well-equipped libraries, workshops, seminars, etc. Revive Guardian and Counseling units in schools that will address issues like poor family upbringing, faulty character-building, career paths, etc should be provide by the government. The is also need for the school management to organise workshops in one institution in the south east geopolitical areas of the country and come up with strategies for the reduction and ultimate prevention of criminal acts in tertiary institutions that will suit each region. The aim is to examine the causes of crimes in tertiary institutions and map out preventive strategies in order to ensure a safer and quiet environment for learning, teaching, and research. Set up a special security patrol team in higher institutions. Institutions should establish and maintain efficient security services and infrastructure on their campuses and promote effective collaboration between campus security officials and the security agencies in their communities. Man school gates with

competent security personnel, provision of CCTV in key areas on campus, better measures for screening of persons and vehicles entering and exiting the institutions, regular publication of security related issues via various media,

Furthermore, security directorate should pay more attention to crises management, intelligence gathering, security networking as well as crime prevention, Government should encourage parents, and the society at large, to take the socialization of their children and the young ones more seriously. Government and owners of private tertiary institutions should adequately fund their institutions and provide the facilities relevant for interesting learning and teaching. The government should use intelligence personnel to fish and flush out cultists and criminals from tertiary institutions as well as create a database for students expelled from any tertiary institution to be shared by all such institutions. Regarding age criterion, schools maintains that, "No person under the age of 16 years may be admitted to the university as a student." The government should enforce this in other higher institutions. Drastic reduction in class sizes to ensure quality and appropriate learning and teaching environment is required. Undergraduate classes in science and technology should be pegged at 50-60 students while those in arts, humanities, and social sciences should be pegged in 80-100 students. Collaboration between the universities and security agencies in the areas of information sharing, training and research should be strengthened. Based on the foregoing, it therefore becomes needful to investigate into the challenges of insecurity on academic performance of undergraduates in south east public universities

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to guide the study:

1. How does insecurity affect academic performance of undergraduates in public universities in South East geopolitical Zone?
2. What are the solutions to the challenges of insecurity among undergraduates in public universities in South East geopolitical Zone?

Research Method

The descriptive survey design was adopted in the study. The population of the study consisted of all 400 level undergraduates of 2021/2022 academic session in the 8 public universities in South East geopolitical zone. This level of students were chosen because of high death rate among final year students in the universities due to security challenges. The total is 93,126 comprising 42139 males and 50982 females. The sample of the study was 600 undergraduates. In composing the sample, Simple random sampling technique was used to select two universities which include Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, and Abia State University Uturu. Two faculties were sampled in each of the universities using simple random sampling technique, in each of faculties, three departments were also sampled using simple random sampling. In each of the departments 100 students were sampled

amounting to 600 undergraduates. A structured questionnaire developed by the researcher was the instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: A and B. Part A of the questionnaire specified information on personal characteristics of the respondents while part B contained 20 items with regards to the research questions. The response option of the research questions in the questionnaire was Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The questionnaire was validated by three experts, two in the area of sociology of education and the other in measurement and evaluation, all in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. To establish the reliability of the questionnaire, trial testing method was used on 50 undergraduates of University of Porthacourt outside the study area. The reliability was calculated using Cronbach Alpha for each of the subsections. At the end of the analysis, the scores obtained were 0.81and 0.80 respectively. The results showed high reliability of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to the respondents with the help of 14 research assistants, who were paired for each of the eight faculties. Administration of the questionnaire was done during the second semester of 2021/2022 academic session. All copies of the questionnaire distributed were collected back because of on the spot delivery method and collection technique applied. Mean rating was used to analysis the data. The four point response mode used, informed the use of mean 2.50 as the cut-off point for decision. The decision rule was that mean scores of items of 2.50 and above were regarded as positives while mean scores below 2.50 were regarded as negative.

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: How does insecurity affect academic performance of undergraduates in public universities in South East geopolitical Zone?

Table 1: Mean rating of respondents on how Insecurity affects academic performance of undergraduates in public universities in South East geopolitical Zone

S/N	QUESTIONNAIRE	$\bar{X}$	REMARKS
1.	I do not visit my classmates for group discussion again for fear of being kidnapped.	2.80	Agreed
2.	I do not visit the school library for my private studies for fear of stray bullets	2.50	Agreed
3.	I resorted to studying alone in my room as a result of fear which hampers my academic performance	2.60	Agreed
4.	I don't go for lectures everyday for fear of being kidnapped on the road	2.82	Agreed
5.	I do not go for night classes for because of the fear of being killed	2.60	Agreed
	I do not carry out my assignments regularly for fear of being kidnapped	2.50	Agreed
6.	It discourages me from going to school for my private studies which affects my academic performance	2.80	Agreed
7.	I do not carry out my assignments regularly	2.79	Agreed
8.	Gun men rob students of their belongings thereby making academic environment unconducive for me	2.88	Agreed

9.	Maiming or killing of my fellow students disrupts my academic activities which affects my academic performance	2.97	Agreed
10.	I do not go for tutorials because of insecurity which affects my grade	2.63	Agreed
	total	**29.89**	
	Cluster x	**2.71**	**Agreed**

In Table 1, all the items (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11) obtained mean score 2.50 and above indicating agreed. On the whole the mean of means was rated 2.71 it implies that all the above items in table 1 are how insecurity affects academic performance of undergraduates in public universities in South East geopolitical Zone.

Research Question 2: What are the solutions to the challenges of insecurity among undergraduates in public universities in South East geopolitical Zone?

Table 2: Mean rating of respondents on solutions to the challenges of insecurity among undergraduates in public universities in South East geopolitical Zone

S/N	QUESTIONNAIRE	$\bar{X}$	REMARKS
11.	Orientation and public enlightenment programmes for students on safety precautions both within and outside the campus; on the ills of cultism and drug abuse	2.86	Agreed
12.	The curricula and researches should reflect national development and security needs and aspirations while satisfying the highest global standards	3.01	Agreed
13.	School authorities should engage the mind and body of the students with games and recreation, well-equipped libraries, workshops, seminars, etc.	2.60	Agreed
14.	Providing competent security personnel at the school gate	2.88	Agreed
15.	Provision of CCTV in key areas on campus	3.00	Agreed
16.	Regular publication of security related issues via various media	2.90	Agreed
17.	Security directorate should pay more attention to crises management, intelligence gathering, security networking as well as crime prevention	2.56	Agreed
18.	Drastic reduction in class sizes to ensure quality and appropriate learning and teaching environment.	2.79	Agreed
19.	Collaboration between the universities and security agencies in the areas of information sharing, training and research should be strengthened	2.88	Agreed
20.	The government should use intelligence personnel to fish and flush out cultists and criminals from tertiary institutions as well as create a database for students expelled from any tertiary institution to be shared by all such institutions	3.12	Agreed
21.	Better measures for screening of persons and vehicles entering and exiting the institutions	2.94	Agreed
	Total	**31.54**	
	cluster x	**2.86**	**Agreed**

In Table 2, items (12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21) were rated agreed by the respondents. On the whole the grand mean score was rated 2.86, this implies that all the items in table 2 are solutions to the challenges of insecurity among undergraduates in public universities in South East geopolitical Zone.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study showed that insecurity affects academic performance of undergraduates' public universities in South east geopolitical zone. This is because insecurity makes the institutions of learning unconducive, disrupts academic calendar and some students drop out of school because of insecurity. In this vein, Osondu (2021) agreed that students learning in south east schools have been in jeopardy since insecurity tension heightened in the area. The findings of the study further showed that insecurity affects students reading habit in school, many undergraduates do not go for night classes for their exams and it deprives students from engaging in group discussion which affects their grade. This is supported by Adindu (2021), who agreed that many students often miss classes; most students rarely go for academic activities these days sequel to the issue of insecurity. Findings showed that insecurity discourage student from going to school for their private studies, some of them do not carry out assignments regularly. Also, there is untold hardship, untimely death among students and many of them do not go for tutorials again because of insecurity. Akachukwu (2021) also agreed that there is premature death and untold hardship among students' in public universities in south east because of security challenges.

The seconding findings of the study showed some measures that could cushion the issue of insecurity in public universities in south east geopolitical zones. Accordingly, the findings showed that there should be orientation and public enlightenment programmes for students on safety precautions both within and outside the campus; on the ills of cultism and drug abuse. School authorities should engage the mind and body of the students with games and recreation, well-equipped libraries, workshops, seminars, etc, providing competent security personnel at the school gate as well as the provision of CCTV in key areas on campus. Similarly, Nwankwo and Olu (2021), agreed that if more security personnel are deployed within public universities insecurity among undergraduates in public universities in Nigeria can be eradicated. The findings showed that regular publication of security related issues via various media is required and security directorate should pay more attention to crises management, intelligence gathering, security networking as well as crime prevention. Also there is need for drastic reduction in class sizes to ensure quality and appropriate learning and teaching environment. To support these findings, Akachukwu (2021) stressed that government and nongovernmental organizations should engage in regular publication of security affairs. The findings showed that collaboration between the universities and security agencies in the areas of information sharing, training and research should be strengthened. The government should use intelligence personnel to fish and flush out cultists and criminals from tertiary institutions as well as create a database for students expelled from any tertiary institution to be shared by all such institutions. To support these findings Nwankwo and Olu (2021) reported that government is expected to deploy intelligence personnel to fish and flush out cultists and criminals within

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is expedient to deduce that insecurity encumbers academic engagement of undergraduates public universities in south east geopolitical Zone and when their academic engagement is low, poor academic performance becomes inevitable. The problem insecurity therefore needs quick response, due to its significant effects on academic performance. In

promoting educational standard and sustainable development in public universities, federal and state governments and institution management should show more concern and interest in using their skillful and professional competence to bring about security and safety of the environment for the educational system to thrive.

Implications to Societal development

Education brings about all round development, politically, economically, technologically etc. If education will be toiled with, this will affect the heart of the entire society. There will be no growth and development; brain drain not the intelligent youths and lecturers, poor health, promotes exploitation, poverty trap, unemployment, lack of representation, and leads to untimely death. Therefore, if adequate steps are not taken by the federal government and other stake holders to address the issues behind insecurity in south east geographical zones, the undergraduates students will lack the required motivation, knowledge and skills to enhance on socioeconomic, political and technological growth of the society. Insecurity puts some undergraduates at the risk of joining secret cult, engaging in cybercrime, ritualism, and other criminal activities. Insecurity action creates room for brain drain of the intelligent and youths needed for national development.

Recommendations

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

1. School authorities should organized orientation and public enlightenment programmes for students on safety precautions both within and outside the campus; on the ills of cultism and drug abuse.
2. School authorities should engage the mind and body of the students with games and recreation, well-equipped libraries, workshops, seminars, etc,
3. Government and school management should provide competent security personnel at the school gate as well as the provision of CCTV in key areas on campus.
4. School authorities should provide regular publication of security related issues via various media is required and security directorate should pay more attention to crises management, intelligence gathering, security networking as well as crime prevention.
5. The government should use intelligence personnel to fish and flush out cultists and criminals from tertiary institutions as well as create a database for students expelled from any tertiary institution to be shared by all such institutions.

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