

## **EDUCATING CHILDREN IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS AMIDST INSECURITY IN RIVERS STATE STAKEHOLDERS COPING STRATEGIES.**

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### **Abstract**

*The study which adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate educating children in secondary schools amidst insecurity in Rivers State: Stakeholders Coping Strategies. The population of the study consisted of 114, 746 teachers and students in the 247 public secondary schools in Rivers State. The sample size of the study was 1,891 teachers and students. The sample size was arrived at using the stratified random sampling technique. A questionnaire titled, "Stakeholders Strategies for Coping with Secondary Education Amidst Security Challenges Questionnaire (SSCSEASCQ) was used for data collection. The instrument contained 32 items. The instrument was properly validated. Test retest method and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Statistics were used to test the reliability. A reliability index of 0.72 was obtained. Data on research questions were analysed with mean standard deviation and rank order while z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha significant level. It was observed that developing positive mindset, being security conscious and reporting suspicious people/movement to school authorities were some coping strategies adopted by students in Rivers State; creation of safety plans, placement of security guards at strategic locations and perimeter fencing of school premises were some coping strategies adopted by school heads/teachers and beefing up security in some secondary schools, as well as partnering with community and other non-state security providers were the coping strategies adopted by the government. Based on these findings, conclusion was drawn and the following recommendations among others were made: students should include counseling and rehabilitation therapies as their strategies for coping with the security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State and government should show strong commitment to transparency and accountability of people's lives and properties in the state without political sentiments being attached to security issues.*

## **Introduction**

Education is the greatest gift that anybody can give to his/her loved ones. Education brings about the necessary developments in every individual. It brings about acquisition of skills knowledge and desirable changes in behaviour. An educated person is an asset to his immediate family and the society at large. He/she is guided by democratic principles such as that of equity, rule of law, tolerance and respect for the rights of other people. Access to education is expected to enhance peaceful co-existence of individuals in their respective communities. It is equally expected to enhance social-economic growth and development. The benefits of having access to education are too numerous to be quantified hence it is not supposed to be interrupted or disturbed in any way, moreso when we have over 10 million out of school children in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, numerous challenges confront the citizens. We have the challenge of unemployment of young school leavers. According to NBS (2009) and Okoli (2009), more than 10 million Nigerians were unemployed as at March, 2009. With the rate secondary schools and tertiary institutions are turning out graduates every year; the unemployment rate today may be three times higher than what it was in 2009. Related to unemployment is the issue of poverty. Over 70% of Nigerians live below poverty line of 1 dollar per day. In otherwords, most Nigerians are very poor. There is also the challenge of infrastructure and basic amenities. Large number of Nigerian population do not have access to portable water, good roads, electricity, health care facilities and quality education.

This situation became worsened by the security situation of the country in recent times. Insecurity means the feeling of not being safe, having fear of being hurt or harmed by other people. Presently, there are so many challenges of insecurity in the country. This ranges from the issue of Boko Haram in the North, the Fulani Herdsmen, Kidnappers, armed robbers, communal crisis, the activities of freedom fighters in the South-East and agitations for resource control and true federalism here and there have combined to cause serious tension in the country. The insecurity in the country has claimed many lives, properties that worth millions of dollars have been destroyed and yet, the situation still persists. Many Nigerians have been rendered homeless, many schools have been burnt down and many people are taken hostage by miscreants and criminal elements everyday. This situation has impacted negatively to our school system.

School security is very important to adequate teaching and learning. No teacher can conveniently perform his/her job in an unsafe environment. In the same way, no student will be able to learn effectively in an unsafe

environment. Effective teaching and learning as well as other school activities can only be carried out in a conducive and friendly environment (An environment that guarantees the protection of lives and properties). An environment without security threats is very desirable because it enhances teaching and learning. The present situation in Nigeria has made school security or the security of school children an issue of serious concern to parents. We have heard cases of abduction of school children and school teachers at different parts of the country, Rivers State inclusive. People are now very conscious of the safety of the school environment where they send their children.

Secondary education is the level of education after primary education and before tertiary education. It is that level of education in-between primary and tertiary levels of education. It is a very important level of education because it prepares the middle level man power required in our productive sectors. It equally prepares its graduates for tertiary education. This very important level of education must be sustained. It should not be allowed to be destroyed by terrorists and other criminal minded people. We need to look for strategies that can be utilized to reduce the effect of insecurity on secondary education in Rivers State. Strategies according to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English are planned series of actions for achieving something. There is the need to find out series of actions stakeholders in secondary education are adopting to ensure its sustainability amidst the challenges of insecurity in Rivers State.

Politics and political violence are serious threats to security in some parts of Nigeria (Ukiwo, 2012). The struggle for political power between the opposition parties and the incumbent ruling party has created serious security challenges in many states in Nigeria, Rivers State inclusive. There is an urgent need of exploring strategies of tackling security issues in the country. Ogunyemi (2012) suggest that government have to adopt a workable social security programme that will be beneficial to all especially the less privileged people. They need strategies such as, the organization of neighbourhood watch which will work with the state security to detect and fight against criminals (Chuku, Wosu&Amugo, 2013).

Contributing to strategies for managing insecurity in our secondary schools, Sambo (2013) advocates for sensitization campaign. Through this campaign, students will be taught what to do at the face of security challenges. They need to understand it clearly in their minds that security is a collective responsibility of everybody and they can provide useful information that can enhance the performance of security agencies. Supporting these ideas Akintunde and Selzing- Musa (2016) are of the opinion that government have

to use proactive measures such as beefing up security around schools and sensitization of youths against the dangers of insecurity through the media and civil society groups.

The case studies so far revealed that, governments fight security challenges by mobilizing state forces and resources against the criminals based on the assumption that the criminals are social misfits and greedy people. This appears to be wrong because insecurity in the state is associated to failures of government and social institutions. The complex linkage between governance and insecurity according to Ukiwo (2012) suggests the imperative of adopting a human security approach. Human security approaches as explained by Alkire (2003) aim at safeguarding the vital core of all human lives from critical pervasive threats in a way that is consistent with long-term human fulfillment. The approach is protective and seeks to respect the human person. It enjoins all institutions charged with security to offer protection in ways that are institutionalized rather than episodic, preventive rather than reactive and responsive rather than rigid.

Partnership between public and community security institutions has also been advocated. Baley and Shearing (2005) are of the opinion that the monopoly of public security by police has not solved our problems rather the intervention of other non-state security providers is seen to contribute to improvement in security provision in many localities.

School heads and teachers on their part have been advised to create safety plans in their schools (Akintunde & Selzing- Musa, 2016). Also providing and stationing at strategic points security guards for effective surveillance and control of human and vehicular movement within the school environment is necessary. This will help them to gather security information adequately. Otuene (2011) suggests that schools should provide security tips and teach the students self-protection techniques. School authorities should ensure that every classroom, office or building has an emergency exit door..

In another related study on managing secondary education for national security by Kaegon & Awah (2014), parents are advised to intensify their presence within their children's school especially at closing hours, dial 911, and records license numbers and obtain physical descriptions of criminals and cases of insecurity in the school environment. Some of them who are security officers could volunteer themselves to deliver security lectures to the staff and students. Some of the parents could be security experts, ex-police, navy or army officers. Their wealth of experience could be of immense benefit to the school.

The students equally have roles to play in the sustainability of a safe learning environment. They are expected to use some of the following

strategies in coping with environmental insecurity. Having a positive mind-set; this implies one's determination to survive and move on in spite of all odds (Akintunde & Selzing-Musa, 2016). In this determination, they have to be security conscious and mindful of what is happening in their environment. They need to avoid moving at odd hours and picking valuable things on the road (Shaibu, 2015). It's important that they report suspicious people and movement to school authorities.

Nigeria has been facing serious security challenges since 2009. This problem escalated to the point that in 2012, United States of America enlisted Nigeria as a terrorist country. Many institutions, individuals and communities have fallen victims of insecurity in the country. Most people now live in fear as there are no exceptions to this problem. Churches, mosques, schools, homes and offices are not spared. Nigerian children are today educated amidst the challenges of insecurity. The researchers are so much bothered by this situation. It is against this backdrop that the researchers want to investigate the coping strategies that stakeholders can adopt in educating children in secondary schools amidst insecurity in Rivers State.

The following research questions and hypothesis guided the study:

1. What are the strategies students adopt to cope with the security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State?
  2. What are the strategies school heads/teachers adopt to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State?
  3. What are the strategies government adopt to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers state
1. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female students on the strategies students adopt to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State.
  2. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female teachers on the strategies school heads/teachers adopt to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State.
  3. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of school heads and teachers on the strategies government adopt to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State.

The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha significant level:

## **Method**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, the population of the study comprised of 8,264 secondary school teachers and 106,482 public senior secondary school students in Rivers State (Source: Rivers State Post

Primary Schools Board, 2017). A sample of 826 teachers (506 female and 320 male) and 1,065 students (565 male and 500 female) was drawn through stratified random sampling technique. This represented 10% of the teachers and 1% of public senior secondary school students in Rivers State respectively. A questionnaire made up of 32 items was used for data collection. The questionnaire was titled; “Stakeholders Strategies for Coping with Secondary Education Amidst Security Challenges Questionnaire (SSCSEASCQ)”. The questionnaire which was structured based on a 4 point modified likert scale was properly validated and tested for reliability through the test retest approach and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. A reliability index of 0.72 was established. Data collected were analysed with mean scores, standard deviation and rank order for the research questions and z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha significant level

## Results

**Table 1:** Mean scores, standard deviation and rank order analysis of male and female students opinion on the strategies students adopt to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State.

S/N	Students coping strategies	Male students N= 565`		Female Student N=500		Mean set	Rank order	Decision
		$\bar{x}_1$	SD <sub>1</sub>	$\bar{x}_2$	SD <sub>2</sub>			
1.	Developing positive mind set.	2.73	0.66	2.75	0.60	2.74	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Agreed
2.	Being security conscious	2.76	0.62	2.80	0.58	2.78	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Agreed
3.	Counseling therapy	2.42	0.64	2.44	0.62	2.43	7 <sup>th</sup>	Disagreed
4.	Rehabilitation therapy	2.38	0.60	2.24	0.61	2.31	8 <sup>th</sup>	Disagreed
5.	Avoiding moving at odd hours	2.68	0.68	2.70	0.67	2.69	4 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
6.	Avoiding lonely roads	2.65	0.61	2.63	0.63	2.64	5 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
7.	Reporting suspicious people or movement to school authorities	2.80	0.59	2.82	0.59	2.81	1 <sup>st</sup>	Agreed
8.	Avoiding picking valuable suspicious items on the road.	2.62	0.67	2.60	0.69	2.61	6 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
	Aggregate mean and standard deviation	2.63	0.63	2.62	0.62	2.63		

Table 1 shows that items 1,2,5,6,7 and 8 with rank order ranging from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> had weighted mean scores that were greater than the criterion mean of

2.50. They were accepted as the strategies students adopt to cope with the security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State. While, items 3 and 4 with rank order of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> were rejected as strategies adopted by students to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education because they had mean scores that were less than the criterion mean. The aggregate weighted mean set score of 2.63 which is above the criterion mean, is an evidence that both the male and the female students unanimously agreed on the strategies students adopt to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State. Therefore, the strategies adopted by students to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State include: developing positive mind set, being security conscious, avoiding moving at odd hours, avoiding lonely roads, reporting suspicious people or movement to school authorities and avoiding picking suspicious/valuable items on the road.

**Table 2:** Mean scores, standard deviation and rank order analysis of male and female teachers, opinion on the strategies school heads/teachers adopt to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State.

S/N	School heads/ teachers coping strategies	Male Teachers N= 320		Female Teachers N=506		Mean set	Rank order	Decision
		$\bar{x}_1$	SD <sub>1</sub>	$\bar{x}_2$	SD <sub>2</sub>			
1.	Creation of safety plans in their schools.	2.86	0.92	2.84	0.89	2.85	1 <sup>st</sup>	Agreed
2.	Placing security guards at strategic locations around the school.	2.84	0.86	2.82	0.83	2.83	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Agreed
3.	Provision of security tips to students.	2.78	0.88	2.80	0.87	2.79	5 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
4.	Teaching students self defensive/protection techniques.	2.74	0.90	2.76	0.83	2.75	7 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
5.	Provision of exit doors in all the classrooms and offices	2.70	0.91	2.74	0.85	2.72	8 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
6.	Fencing of school compound	2.80	0.84	2.76	0.90	2.78	6 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
7.	Provision of gates at all the entrances of the school.	2.82	0.82	2.80	0.81	2.81	4 <sup>th</sup>	Agreed
8.	Collaborating with host	2.85	0.83	2.83	0.82	2.84	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Agreed

communities and  
security agencies on  
security matters  
Aggregate mean and 2.80 0.87 2.79 0.85 2.80  
standard deviation

Data on table 2 show that all the items on the table in the rank order ranging from 1<sup>st</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> had weighted mean scores that were greater than the criterion mean of 2.50 and were accepted as the strategies school heads/teachers adopt to cope with the security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State. The aggregate weighted mean set score of 2.80 which is greater than the criterion mean is an evidence that both the male and the female teachers collectively agreed on the strategies school heads/teachers adopt to cope with the security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State. Therefore, the strategies adopted by school heads/teachers to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State include: creation of safety plans in their schools, placing security guards at strategic locations around the school, provision of security tips to students, teaching students self defensive/protection techniques, provision of exit doors in all classrooms and offices, fencing of school compounds, provision of gates at all the entrances into the school and collaborating with host communities and security agencies on security matters.

**Table 3:** Mean scores, standard deviation and rank order analysis of school heads and teachers opinion on the strategies government adopt to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State.

S/N	Government coping strategies	School Heads N= 25		Teachers N=801		Mean set	Rank order	Decision
		$\bar{x}_1$	SD <sub>1</sub>	$\bar{x}_2$	SD <sub>2</sub>			
1.	Strong commitment to transparency and accountability in the political process.	2.02	0.76	2.06	0.72	2.04	7 <sup>th</sup>	Disagreed
2.	Adopting a workable social security programme beneficial to all	2.35	0.78	2.33	0.78	2.34	5 <sup>th</sup>	Disagreed
3.	Organization of neighbourhood watch who work hand in hand with security agencies.	2.38	0.69	2.42	0.74	2.40	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Disagreed

4.	Mounting of sensitization campaign in secondary schools.	2.24	0.72	2.26	0.66	2.25	6 <sup>th</sup>	Disagreed
5.	Beefing up security around some secondary schools.	2.68	0.64	2.64	0.73	2.66	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Agreed
6.	Partnering with community and other non-state security providers.	2.65	0.66	2.69	0.71	2.67	1 <sup>st</sup>	Agreed
7.	Adopting human security approach that is protective, preventive and responsive	2.42	0.70	2.34	0.62	2.38	4 <sup>th</sup>	Disagreed
8.	Installation of internal circuit cameras around every secondary school.	1.86	0.74	2.04	0.65	1.95	8 <sup>th</sup>	Disagreed
	Aggregate mean and standard deviation	2.33	0.71	2.35	0.70	2.34		

Table 3 shows that items 5 and 6 in the rank order of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> had weighted mean scores which were greater than the criterion mean of 2.50 and were agreed on as strategies adopted by government in coping with the security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State. Items number 1,2,3,4, 7 and 8 in the rank order ranging from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> had weighted mean scores that were less than the criterion mean and were disagreed on as the strategies adopted by government in coping with the security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State. The aggregate weighted mean set score of 2.34 which was less than the criterion mean shows that both school heads and teachers collectively disagreed on most of the items as the strategies adopted by government in coping with the security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State. Therefore, the strategies adopted by government in coping with the security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State include: beefing up security around some secondary schools and partnering with community and other non-state security providers.

**Table 4:** z-test of difference between the mean scores of male and female students on the strategies students adopt to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State.

Category	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Df	z-cal	z-critical	Decision
Male students	565	2.63	0.63	1,063	1.08	$\pm 1.96$	Ho <sub>2</sub> Not significant Null hypothesis retained
Female students	500	2.62	0.62				

Table 4 shows a summary of mean, standard deviation and z-test of difference between the male and female students on the strategies students adopt to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State. The z-test statistics calculated and was used in testing the hypothesis stood at 1.08 while the critical z-value was 1.96 at 1, 063 degree of freedom using 0.05 alpha level of significance. The z-calculated value was less than the critical z-value. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female students on the strategies students adopt to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State was retained.

**Table 5:** z-test of difference between the mean scores of male and female teachers on the strategies school heads/teachers adopt to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State.

Category	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Df	z-cal	z-critical	Decision
Male teachers	320	2.80	0.87	824	0.93	$\pm 1.96$	Ho <sub>2</sub> Not significant Null hypothesis retained
Female teachers	506	2.79	0.85				

Table 5 shows a summary of mean, standard deviation and z-test of difference between the male and female teachers on the strategies school heads/teachers adopt to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State. The z-test statistics calculated and was used in testing the hypothesis stood at 0.93 while the critical z-value was 1.96 at 824 degree of freedom using 0.05 alpha level of significance. The z-calculated value was less than the z-critical value. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female teachers on the strategies school heads/teachers adopt to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State was retained.

**Table 6:** z-test of difference between the mean scores of school heads and teachers on the strategies government adopt to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State.

Category	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Df	z-cal	z-critical	Decision
School heads	25	2.33	0.71	824	1.12	$\pm 1.96$	Ho <sub>2</sub> Not significant Null hypothesis retained
Teachers	801	2.35	0.70				

Table 6 shows a summary of mean, standard deviation and z-test of difference between the school heads and teachers on the strategies government adopt to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State. The z-test statistics calculated and was used in testing the hypothesis stood at 1.12 while the critical z-value was 1.96 at 824 degree of freedom using 0.05 alpha level of significance. The z-calculated value was less than the z-critical value. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the mean scores of school heads and teachers on the strategies government adopt to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State was retain.

### Discussion

The study revealed that the strategies adopted by students in coping with the security challenges affecting them include: developing positive mind sets, being security conscious, avoiding moving at odd hours, avoiding lonely roads, reporting suspicious people to the school authorities and avoiding pick suspicious or valuable items on the road. These findings are in line with the suggestions of Akintunde and Selzing- Musa (2016) that students in areas facing serious security challenges should develop positive mind set and have the determination to survive and forge ahead inspite of all odds. This will help to give hope for a better tomorrow. Students should also be security conscious, by thinking about safe practices and protection of their lives and properties. In doing this, every strange and security issue should be reported to the school authorities and they should avoid lonely roads, picking of suspicious/valuable items on the ground and evil associations in the school.

The study found that the strategies school heads and teachers adopt to cope with security challenges affecting their schools include: creation of safety plans in their school, placing security guards at strategic locations, provision of security tips to students, teaching students self defensive/ protection techniques, provision of exit doors, fencing of school compounds, provision of

gates and collaboration with host communities and security agencies on security matters. These findings are consistent with that of Otuene (2011) and Akintunde and Selzing- Musa (2016) who in their respective studies suggested that enough security guards should be employed and positioned around the school, movement in and out of the school should be controlled by fencing the school round and provision of gates at their entrances. Otuene (2011) suggested that in addition to the provision of security tips to the students, they should be taught self defensive and protective techniques.

Finally, the study revealed that the strategies adopted by government in coping with insecurity affecting secondary education include: beefing up security around some secondary schools and partnering with community and other non-state security providers. These findings are in agreement with Ogunyemi (2012), Chuku, Wosu and Amugo (2013) who in their separate opinions suggested that the state should beef up security in public institutions located in areas with serious security challenges. They equally suggested that there should be a synergy between security agencies, host communities and non-state security providers in the state. Strong commitment to transparency and accountability in the political process, organization of neighbourhood watch who work hand in hand with security agencies, mounting of serious security campaign in secondary schools, adopting human security approach that is protective, preventive and responsive, as well as installation of internal circuit cameras were not strategies adopted by government. These findings are contrary to the opinion of Sambo (2013) Kaegon and Awah (2014), Chuku, Wosu and Amugo (2013) who separately suggested that mounting serious security campaign and sensitization in public institutions will help in curbing the security challenges faced by Nigerians since security is a collective responsibility of all. The findings equally agree with the opinion of Ogunyemi (2012) who suggests that government should show strong commitment to transparency and accountability in the political process. This will help to reduce tension and security challenges in the state. Government instead of waiting to always react to security challenges should adopt proactive, preventive and responsive strategies that will ensure the security of lives and properties in Rivers State.

### **Conclusion**

School heads, teachers and students have been doing their best to cope with security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State. The government have not done so much in this regard. They should use their powers and the security apparatus of the state appropriately and consciously to

stem the tide of insecurity in the state. Security issues should not be politicized because nobody knows who will become the next victim.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Students should include counseling and rehabilitation therapies as their strategies for coping with the security challenges affecting secondary education in Rivers State.
2. School authorities should consistently collaborate with host communities and security agencies and they should form the habit of investigating grape vine information properly rather than waving them aside.
3. Government should show strong commitment to transparency and accountability of people's lives and properties in the state without political sentiments being attached to security issues.

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