Insecurity and of Out-of-School Children in Ibarapa Region of Oyo State 2013-2023

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2025

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Certification

This is to certify that Tobi Ismail AKINYELE with matriculation number LCU/PG/002807 carried out this research work titled **''Insecurity and of out-of-School Children in Ibarapa Region of Oyo State 2013-2023''** in the department of Politics and International Relations, Faculty of Management & Social Sciences, Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria for the Award of Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD) in Peace and Conflict Studies and that this has not been previously submitted.

_____ _____

Dr Modupe Albert **Date**

Promoter

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Dedication

This work is wholeheartedly dedicated to Almighty Allah, the source of all wisdom, strength, and grace throughout this academic journey.

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Acknowledgment

My profound gratitude goes to Lead City University for giving me the academic space to learn my desired course**.** I am also grateful to the Faculty of Management and Social Science and staff of the Department of Politics and International Relations, Lead City University, Ibadan. My acknowledgement goes to the following organisations for sharing information and answering questions that made the study a success; Lead City University Library, Ministries of Education, Youth and Sport.

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To the memory of my Late beloved father, you will forever be remembered.

To my lovely mom, whose sacrifice, prayers, and unwavering belief in my potential laid the foundation for this achievement.

To my brothers, for their patience, love and encouragement through the many long nights and demanding seasons.

And to every child in Nigeria who dreams of an education but is held back by insecurity- may this work be a small step toward a future where every child learns in peace.

Even though the above-mentioned institutions and persons have assisted in the process of this research work, I stand responsible for the error if any, found in this work.

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Abstract

This study examines the interrelationship between insecurity and the growing menace of out-of-school children in Oyo State, Nigeria. In recent years, Oyo state has witnessed a surge in security challenges, including kidnapping, banditry, and communal clashes, which have severely impacted the educational landscape. The study aims to explore how insecurity contributes to school dropout rates and the proliferation of out-of-school children, with an emphasis on socio-economic, cultural, and political factors. Anchored on Social Reproduction Theory, the study explores how patterns of inequality and marginalization; often perpetuated through social institutions—contribute to the persistence of educational exclusion. Additionally, the Structural Functionalist perspective is employed to analyse how the breakdown of key societal structures, such as family, education, and security system, leads to dysfunctions manifesting in the form of out-of-school children. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including parents, teachers, community leaders, and security officials across six local government areas in Oyo State. A sample size of 100 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling, ensuring representation across rural and urban divides. The reliability of the research instruments was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a reliability value of 0.83, indicating high internal consistency. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS software for descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative responses were thematically analyzed. Findings reveal that insecurity significantly contributes to the rising number of out-of-school children. Specifically, 68% of respondents agreed that fear of abduction and violence discourages parents from sending their children to school, especially in rural communities. Moreover, 52% cited poverty; exacerbated by displacement due to insecurity; as a key reason children are kept at home or pushed into child labor. Cultural and religious beliefs were also identified as secondary contributors, particularly in areas where girls are discouraged from attending school. Furthermore, a lack of government presence in volatile areas and poor infrastructure (e.g., lack of perimeter fencing, dilapidated classrooms, and insufficient security personnel) further compromise school safety. The study concludes that insecurity is both a cause and consequence of educational decline in Oyo State. As more children are forced out of school, they become vulnerable to criminal recruitment and social vices, perpetuating the cycle of insecurity. This vicious cycle poses a serious threat to human capital development and long-term socio-economic stability in the region. Based on these findings, the study recommends a multi-pronged approach: increased investment in school infrastructure with a focus on security; community policing and collaboration between schools and local security outfits; poverty alleviation programs to support vulnerable families; and public awareness campaigns to address harmful socio-cultural beliefs hindering education. Additionally, government agencies should strengthen data collection and monitoring systems to identify at-risk children early and ensure they are reintegrated into the school system.

Keywords: Insecurity, Out-of-School Children, Oyo State

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List of Acronyms

Abbreviation	Meaning
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
CRA	Child Rights Act
CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
CYPA	Children and Young Persons Act
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
GCPEA	Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack
GER	Gross Enrolment Rates
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisation
NHGSFP	National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme
NPE	National Policy on Education
OOSCI	Out-of-School Children Initiative
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRT	Social Reproduction Theory
SUBEB	State Universal Basic Education Board
UBE	Universal Basic Education
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Education is a fundamental human right recognized globally, enshrined in international conventions such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which emphasizes that every child has the right to a free and quality education. This right is crucial for empowering individuals, promoting equality, and fostering the holistic development of children. In Nigeria, the Child Rights Act (CRA) and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act reaffirm this, obligating the government to provide education for all children up to a certain level, and making it unlawful for children to be denied access to education[1].

The introduction of various laws and guidelines to ensure that governments at all levels provide education to their citizens is based on the global perception of education as the fundamental element that determines the progress of any nation. It is globally acknowledged that an educationally backward nation cannot operate effectively and efficiently. Education fosters the comprehensive growth of an individual, enabling them to become a productive member of society. In society, the learner functions as a change agent, fostering essential awareness and enlightenment for a developed community[2]. An advanced society is a consequence of education. Education facilitates the acquisition of information and skills essential for national growth by alleviating poverty among residents.

Scholars view education as a catalyst for national development. Consequently, via education, a nation can advance scientifically, economically, politically, religiously, and

technologically. The implication is that life will be pointless, dull, and fruitless if education is not available. As a result, education is the driving force behind development since it empowers individuals to think creatively, work hard, create wealth, and raise their standard of living. Elementary, secondary, and tertiary education are the three main tiers of the educational system[3]. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act lay emphasis on primary and secondary which is in line with global best practices. It is enshrined in the Act that every child of school age should be in school, irrespective of the financial capacity of their parents.

Governments globally are expected to offer free and mandatory basic and secondary education. Indeed, the fourth target of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals is to ensure universal access to inclusive and equitable quality education. As a result, when children of school age (6-11 years in Nigeria) are not in school, it is considered an anomaly. The term, out-of-school children is used to characterised children who are not enrolled in school or who are unable to attend schools due to political, economic, and socio-cultural factors[4].

Out-of-school children are those of school age who possess the capability, health, and mental fitness to attend school, yet are not enrolled in a formal educational institution. Out-of-school children are also described as those who have never had the opportunity to enrol in educational institutions. Out-of-school children are individuals who have either never had the opportunity to enrol in an educational institution or who have withdrawn from the system due to inadequate academic performance, lack of financial support, employment obligations, or disillusionment with the educational framework[5].

A scholar further defines out-of-school children as those of appropriate age for enrolment in primary or lower secondary education, yet not attending school. While Muslim parents tend to enrol their children in Quranic schools for religious education, formal education is also mandatory for school-aged children in the state[6]. The definition specifies that out-of-school children are those aged 6 to 11 years. They represent a demographic of youth who fall within the age range for primary or secondary schooling but are neither participating in non-formal education nor enrolled in the formal education system.

This category of children also encompasses those with impairments who are not participating in either formal or non-formal educational activities. According to one of the numerous reports available, just 9 percent of out-of-school children originate from affluent households, whereas the percentage rises to 31 percent for children from poor households. Similarly, just 12 percent of out-of-school children reside in metropolitan areas, in contrast to 23 percent from rural regions. This demonstrates significant disparities rooted in household economic status and geographic location in which rural dwellers are disadvantaged when it comes to fundamental rights such as access to education[6].

Out-of-school children are a global phenomenon as the UNESCO reported that about two hundred and fifty children globally are out of school. While the problem is global in nature, it is more pronounced among low- and middle-income countries. The issue is shaped by a combination of circumstances, including poverty, gender inequality, conflict, and instability. In Nigeria, the issue of out-of-school children is more pronounced in the Northern part mainly due to socio-cultural factors and recently due to insecurity occasioned by insurgency and banditry[7,8]. Indeed, a significant portion of the estimated sixteen million out of school children in Nigeria are from Northern Nigeria[9]. It is therefore not surprising

that most of the studies on out-of-school children in Nigeria have focused on the North. However, the issue of out-of-school children is gradually raising its head in the Southwest of Nigeria.

The Southwest of Nigeria as a region is traditionally known for high literacy rates; the outcome of being the first region in Nigeria to implement a universal free education up to the secondary school level[10]. However, the growing number of out-of-school children is alarming. Statistics from agencies such as UNICEF and Nigeria's Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) reveal that the national crisis of out-of-school children is not limited to the northern regions, but is now spreading to urban and semi-urban centres in the southwest. The region is made up of six states of which Oyo state is an integral part[7].

Oyo State currently has the highest rate of out-of-school children in the Southwest. According to recent estimates, the state is home to 21% of Nigeria's out of school children. This makes the state closer to Northern States such as Plateau (23.2%), Kwara (22%), Kaduna (21.9%) and Adamawa (21.7%). This is worrisome as other states in Southwest such as Lagos (6%), Ekiti (5%), and Osun (12%) have far lower rates[11]. This comparatively high rate of out-of-school state may come as a surprise to many, but a closer look at the rise of out-of-school children in Nigeria will reveal that insecurity has a big role to play[12,13].

Oyo State as a case study exemplifies the numerous factors contributing to this problem of out-of-school children, with insecurity emerging as a particularly severe concern. The state is not immune to the challenges plaguing to the whole country and it also has its own peculiar challenges. Scholars have identified, socio-cultural factors, poverty, insecurity, and policy failure among others, as the reason for the rising rate of out-of-school children in Nigeria. these are also present in Oyo State.

In recent times, Oyo state has experienced high level of insecurity as seen in farmer-herder clashes in the Ibarapa and Oke Ogun sector, border clashes in the Oyo region and political brigandage in the Ibadan metropolis[14,15]. All of these have led to the disruption in the daily lives of the people. Educational and religious institutions frequently become targets of assaults, resulting in their closure and disruptions in both learning and communal activities. This thus leads to diminished literacy rates and a deficiency in morality and skills, adversely impacting the overall development of human capital in the state[16].

Oyo State is just emerging from a brutal farmer-herder conflict and a spate of criminal activities which rocked the hinterlands. The state has experienced a rise in cases of ransom kidnappings and violent robberies. These actions caused anxiety and uncertainty, rendering educational institutions perilous for children in the town[15.16,17]. Parents' hesitance to carry their children to school, driven by safety apprehensions, has intensified the issue of school absenteeism among children. Conflicts between pastoralist herders and farmers raged for a long period in Oke Ogun and Ibarapa, leading to loss of lives and wanton destruction of properties resulting the curbed social activities. These armed confrontations led to the displacement of entire communities, thereby affecting the lives and educational prospects of children. Schools in the affected town were frequently abandoned or destroyed, thereby endangering the safety of students and personnel[17].

The presence of insecurity due to violent acts in Oyo State presents a substantial threat to the educational environment. Security concerns substantially affect the state's educational system and the future prospects of its pupils. The disputes between herders and farmers have been a major cause of instability in Oyo State. Conflicts over territory and resources often emerge between pastoralist herders and sedentary agriculturalists. These armed

confrontations often lead to the displacement of entire communities, thereby affecting the lives and educational prospects of children[18].

Educational establishments situated in crisis-affected regions are frequently abandoned or destroyed, thereby endangering the safety of students and personnel. Oyo State has experienced a rise in ransom kidnappings and violent robberies. These actions generate dread and uncertainty, rendering educational institutions perilous for youngsters. Parents' hesitance to transport their children to school, stemming from safety worries, has intensified the issue of school absenteeism among youngsters.

Ethnic and religious conflicts have the potential to escalate into violent confrontations, hence exacerbating the instability inside a state. Safety issues may lead to disruptions in school operations and result in children being unable to attend. While Oyo State may not be included among the northeastern states that have been severely impacted by the activities of the Boko Haram insurgency, it has its own security challenges. Recently, it was reported that nothing less than twenty-three schools the state had been shut for about 10 years due to boundary conflicts in three local government namely; Atiba, Afijio, Oyo East and Oyo West local government areas of the state[19]. It is only imaginable how many children in those ten years have been discouraged from enrolling in schools because there was no school nearby. In addition to intra-state conflicts, school children in Oyo State are also exposed to inter-state conflicts.

It was reported how boundary conflict between Oyo and Osun state led to the displacement of about four hundred farmers and their families; including children. It was reported that residents of Iwo/Ayedire Local Government Areas in Osun Statee, and Lagelu LGA in Oyo State are currently embroiled in a border dispute which has displaced people in

communities such as Ogun-Ajo, Paku, Arikese, Ejisun, Oloyaa, Monlamu, Eleeru, Onilapa, Petugble, Maako, Eleye, and Ogundiran[20]. Many people in these communities have been displaced by armed conflicts and majority of the children have also been displaced. In addition, when parents are in survival mode, enrolling their children in schools will be the least of their concerns

Experts have argued that the objectives of secondary education can only be realized in a school atmosphere that is safe, secure, accommodating, and productive, devoid of any form of insecurity. Insecurity is a societal malady that endangers human life and organizational operations. In contemporary society, no institution can be deemed a school without fundamental security measures that ensure the safety of individuals and property. It is evident that numerous teachers and students are embroiled in conflicts that lead to insecurity for both lives and school property[21].

It is concerning when an individual lacks control over a situation and must depend on the uncertain cooperation of others, potentially leading to frustration stemming from insecurity. Insecurity poses a significant threat to the educational process and the overall peace within and around schools, often resulting in detrimental consequences on the efficacy of teaching and learning within the educational system[22]. Consequently, the ongoing issues of insecurity, including kidnappings, banditry, political violence, and cultism, may have adversely impacted the quality and accessibility of education for children of Oyo State. Consequently, these security challenges may dissuade parents from enrolling their children in school and adversely impact their academic performance in both internal and external tests, thereby indirectly elevating the percentage of out-of-school children in the state. The consequence of the aforementioned argument is that any assault

on the educational facilities in Oyo State, constitutes an attack on future leaders, necessitating immediate intervention to avert the impending crisis facing the educational system. The researchers noted that insecurity challenges may have heightened parents' and students' apprehensions regarding the safety of returning to school, particularly for female students, amid rampant criminal activities perpetrated by bandits, thereby necessitating the study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The rise in out-of-school children undermines children's rights and poses a long-term challenge to the social and economic development of the region. Education serves as a tool to break the cycle of poverty, foster social inclusion, and enable individuals to contribute meaningfully to society. Without access to quality education, children are denied opportunities for self-advancement, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking, and radicalization. Oyo State is traditionally known for high literacy rates as its legacy from the from the old Western region which instituted universal free education for all citizens. However, the growing number of out-of-school children is alarming. Statistics from agencies such as UNICEF and Nigeria's Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) reveal that the national crisis of out-of-school children is not limited to the northern regions, but is now spreading to urban and semi-urban centres in the southwest.

The persistent state of insecurity in various parts of Oyo State characterised by assault and destruction of educational institutions by Fulani Herdsmen, bandits, and cult-related activities have severely undermined the educational system and left numerous teachers and students in parts of Oyo State homeless. Moreover, pupils and teachers appear to be

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subjected to lethal violence on a regular basis, while others are abducted for ransom. The rise in criminal activities within educational institutions appears to correlate with a decline in attendance. Government entities and security agencies seem ineffective, leading to the conclusion that the only viable option is for the government to temporarily close most schools to protect teachers and students from further risks. However, studies on the role of insecurity in the rising rate of school children in Nigeria has focused mostly on the Northern parts of Nigeria. In line with this, this study aims to explore the role of insecurity on the rise of out-of-school children in Oyo State, Nigeria.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the role of insecurity on the rising incidence out-of-school children in Oyo State. The specific objectives of the study are to:

i. ascertain the current prevalence of out-of-school children in Oyo State;
ii. identify the sources of insecurity militating against school attendance by pupils in Oyo State;
iii. access the impact of insecurity on the access to education, focusing on specific incidents, such as school attacks and their consequences on children's attendance; and
iv. determine the strategies that could be adopted to improve child security for students in Oyo State.

1.4 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions;

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1. How does the prevalence of out-of-school children in Ibarapa region of Oyo state reflect issues of educational equity, governance, and societal priorities in education?

2. What are the sources of insecurity militating against school attendance by pupils in Ibarapa region Oyo State.

3. How does insecurity manifesting in incidents like school attacks reshape the landscape of educational access, and what deeper scars does it leave on children's willingness and ability to attend school?

4. What are the strategies that could be adopted to improve child security for students in Ibarapa region of Oyo State.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study on the influence of child insecurity on out-of-school children in Ibarapa region of Oyo State, Nigeria, has the potential to benefit several stakeholders. This study has the potential to benefit a wide array of stakeholders, from policy makers and NGOs to parents and the children themselves, all of whom play critical roles in ensuring that every child has access to education in a secure environment.

The first set of beneficiaries of this study were policy makers and government agencies. By providing detailed insights into the relationship between child insecurity and the high rate of out-of-school children in Oyo State, the study will help these entities craft informed policies and allocate resources more effectively. The findings can support the development of educational policies that prioritize security measures, particularly in vulnerable communities, thereby reducing the risk of school dropouts caused by insecurity.

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Governmental bodies responsible for education and child welfare were better equipped to implement strategies that ensure safer environments for students, thus promoting higher enrolment and retention rates in schools.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society groups working in the areas of education, child rights, and community development was also benefit from the study. These organisations often play a crucial role in advocating for children's welfare and providing on-the-ground interventions. The empirical data from the study strengthened their advocacy efforts by providing concrete evidence of the impact of insecurity on education. Moreover, the findings will help NGOs tailor their programs to address the specific needs of out-of-school children and vulnerable communities, making their interventions more targeted and impactful.

Additionally, educational institutions in Oyo State stand to gain valuable insights from the study. Schools were able to identify the specific security challenges affecting their students and take proactive steps to mitigate these risks. School administrators and teachers can use the information to implement support systems for students at risk of dropping out due to insecurity. Furthermore, schools may collaborate more effectively with parents and community leaders to create safer learning environments, ensuring that children stay in school despite external challenges.

For parents and guardians, the study served as an eye-opener to the broader issue of child insecurity and its detrimental effects on education. By understanding the link between insecurity and their children's education, parents may become more aware of the risks and motivated to seek support from community leaders, schools, or government agencies. This

increased awareness can lead to stronger partnerships between families and educational stakeholders, helping to keep children in school and out of harm's way.

The primary beneficiaries of the study are, of course, the children and youth in vulnerable communities. These young individuals, who are either out of school or at risk of dropping out, stand to gain the most from policies and programs informed by the study. By addressing the underlying causes of child insecurity, the study can help create safer environments that enable children to focus on their education. Access to education is critical for their future, and mitigating insecurity can help open up new opportunities for these children to succeed academically and socially.

International organisations and donor agencies such as UNICEF and UNESCO also benefitted from the study's findings. By gaining a deeper understanding of the local dynamics surrounding child insecurity and education in Oyo State, these organizations can tailor their interventions and funding efforts to better suit the needs of the communities they are trying to assist. The study provided a framework for these organisations to collaborate more effectively with local stakeholders in addressing the issue of out-of-school children in the context of child insecurity.

Finally, academics and researchers will find the study valuable for expanding the body of knowledge on child insecurity and education in Nigeria. It served as a reference for future studies, helping to explore similar issues in other regions and contribute to a broader understanding of the impact of insecurity on education. Additionally, the study could inspire further research into innovative solutions and policies that address the twin challenges of child insecurity and educational inequality across the country.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study examined the influence of child insecurity on the problem of out of school children. The variables in the study are child insecurity exemplified by kidnapping, communal conflicts, farmer-herder clashes, boundary disputes and political crises. Out-of-school children are identified by children of school age that have never been enrolled in school and those who have dropped out before they can complete basic education (Primary One- Junior Secondary School Three). The participant scope of the study will be teachers, education managers and government officials in Oyo State. The geographical scope focuses on Ibarapa region of the state particularly Ibarapa Central, Ibarapa East, Ibarapa North.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

Due to prevailing security concerns in some parts of Oyo State, especially in rural and high-risk areas, the researcher was unable to reach certain communities. This may have limited the representativeness of the findings, as some affected groups were not adequately captured. The distribution of questionnaires faced challenges such as respondents' apathy, illiteracy, and mistrust. Some potential participants, particularly parents or guardians of out-of-school children, were either unwilling or unable to complete the questionnaire forms, reducing the volume and diversity of data collected. A number of participants, especially in rural areas, could not read or write in English. This necessitated translation and interpretation during interviews, which may have introduced subtle bias or distortion in the responses.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

Peace: This study refers to freedom from disturbance. It is not only referring to a

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situation devoid of crises, tension, commotion, confrontation, or war but the presence of child rights and civil security.

Out-of-School Children: These are children who are of school age but are not enrolled in or attending formal education. This may be due to various factors such as poverty, insecurity, lack of access to schools, or societal and cultural barriers.

Child Insecurity: This refers to conditions or situations where a child is exposed to physical, emotional, or psychological threats that can negatively impact their well-being, safety, and development. It includes risks like violence, neglect, or living in conflict-prone areas, which can disrupt their education and overall growth.

Boundary Disputes: These are conflicts that arise over the delineation or ownership of land or territorial boundaries between individuals, communities, or states. Boundary disputes often lead to tensions, violence, or legal battles, affecting peace and development in the affected areas.

Security: This study refers to safety of life and property. From social, physical, economic, environmental insecurity caused by the child street hawker and against the vulnerability of child street hawker to juvenile delinquency such as petty crimes, imbibing of negative vices and ending up as a maverick with bad gang in the society.

Child Rights: The United Nations' 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, or CRC, is the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. This has to do with the rights of a child to have, standard education, good welfare, legal protection, good health, freedom from child marriage as enshrinedin municipal and international laws.

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Endnote

Chapter Two
Literature Review

This chapter examines various literature related to the subject of this study which the influence of child insecurity on the rising rates out of school children in Oyo State of Nigeria. The review is focused on related studies that have been conducted in Nigeria with particular attention to findings, scope, methodologies, and theoretical bases. This is expected to show the gap in literature which justifies the current study. The chapter is organised under the following sections and subsections;

2.1 Conceptual Reviews

2.1.1 Out-of-School Children

2.1.2 Child Insecurity

2.1.3 History of Educational Access in Nigeria

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Social Reproduction Theory

2.2.2 Structural Functionalism

2.3 Empirical Review of studies

2.4 Conceptual Model

2.5 Summary of Literature Reviewed

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2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Out-of-School Children

The concept of out-of-school children refers to individuals of school-going age who are not enrolled in formal education institutions. This phenomenon is a pressing global issue, particularly in developing countries, where millions of children are denied access to education. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines out-of-school children as those aged 6 to 17 years who are not attending school, either due to non-enrolment, dropout, or irregular attendance[1].

By United Nations, out-of-school children refer to children who are yet to be enrolled in any formal education, excluding pre-primary education. The age range for out of school children is 6-11 years. Out-of-school children are school-age children that are supposed to be in schools but are not in schools due to parental and governmental failures to provide accessible quality education for them. Out-of-school children are young children in the age group of 1 to 12 that are roaming the street without access to a functional educational system[2]. Out-of-school children are the children whom the government and the parents have failed to provide quality basic education for. The term "out-of-school children" is a non-attendance of the school of school-age children for some established factors.

The term ‘out-of-school’ children is an umbrella term that can be used to describe various schooling anomalies. It covers, non-attendance of school-aged children. This refers to the absence of school-aged children from educational institutions due to certain established circumstances. It also convers children who discontinue their education. These are individuals who leave school prior to completing any educational programs, including

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primary, junior secondary, senior secondary, or others. De-schooling is an alternative type of education outside traditional schooling. It is perceived as a transition from Western education to Qur'anic education or the reverse. A significant number of students in northern Nigeria only attend Qu'ranic schools, where they are instructed to memorize and recite the Qur'an, although they do not acquire the numeracy, reading, and life skills essential for efficient functioning in contemporary society[3].

In 2022, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reported that Nigeria has approximately 20 million out-of-school children. Worldwide, the organization reported that 244 million children and adolescents aged 6 to 18 are out of school. The agency disclosed that India, Nigeria, and Pakistan possess the biggest numbers of out-of-school youngsters worldwide[4].

The number of out-of-school children in Nigeria has fluctuated between 10.5 million and around 15 million for over a decade, exacerbated by the deteriorating security conditions in the country. A report from one of the multinational organisations concerned with education revealed that sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the highest number of children and youth out of school, totalling 98 million individuals excluded from education[5]. This is the sole region experiencing an increase in this number; the decline in out-of-school rates is occurring at a slower pace than the growth of the school-age population. The region with the second largest out-of-school population is Central and Southern Asia, totaling 85 million individuals. The three countries with the highest number of children and youth excluded from school are India, Nigeria, and Pakistan. Data gathered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in collaboration with the Global Education Monitoring Report, indicates that Nigeria has approximately 20 million

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out-of-school children, ranking it second after India, which has a population above one billion. Pakistan ranks third[4].

Nigeria has around 20 million out-of-school children, with 33 percent originating from the northeast, representing the highest number of school-age children not enrolled in education. Subsequently, North-central accounted for 26 percent; North-west for 25 percent; South-south for 24 percent; South-west for 22 percent; and South-east for 19 percent. It is essential to examine the factors contributing to out-of-school children and the associated social ramifications in Nigeria[6].

According to recent estimates, the number of illiterate and non-school-attending children in sub-Saharan Africa is 98 million[7]. One third of the world's uneducated youngsters live in Africa, according to scholars based on the data obtained from the Global Education Monitoring Group[8]. In addition to this, a UNICEF research from 2022 revealed that 60% of Nigerian children under the age of five are multidimensionally impoverished. Another study from a multilateral organisation (UNESCO) revealed that 18% of Nigerian children living in urban centres are not in school, while 30% of children living in rural areas are not in school at all. State and federal policymakers have been unable to solve the problem of children not in school in northern Nigeria due to insecurity and increasing economic hardship[9].

The number of out-of-school children in Nigeria has been on a steady increase in recent times. From 27.2 percent in 2016/17 to 25.6 percent in 2021, the out-of-school rate for primary level education has seen minimal progress. Presently, it is estimated that 25.3% of elementary and lower secondary school-aged children are not in school[10]. This constitutes a denial of one of the basic rights acknowledged by national and international instruments;

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is access to education[11]. Children in many developing countries face obstacles to their educational opportunities, including family choices and influences, corruption, and lack of enthusiasm on the part of adults.

In order to foster intellectual curiosity and critical thinking, education is fundamental to human flourishing. Everyone, regardless of age or socioeconomic level, can benefit from an education because it changes their character and sharpens their intellect. At various points in time, the problem of children who do not attend school has captured the interest of numerous levels of government, as well as development partners like the African Union, Economic Community of African States (ECOWAS), UN, UNESCO, UNICEF, and USAID. According to a group of scholars, there has been minimal progress in creating an educational system that quickly adapts to the requirements of children, despite numerous requests from important parties[12].

The extent of success commonly associated with children's educational enrolment has fostered the perception that today's youngsters are crucial in advancing a country's development through quality education. Nigeria, as a varied nation, is inherently included in this. Experts assert that pertinent education is a crucial prerequisite for mitigating poverty, empowering women, shielding children from various dangers, sexual exploitation, exploitative labour, advancing human rights and democracy, preserving the environment, and affecting population growth[13]. The lack of children in schools in many societies today exposes the community to numerous risks. It has been extensively demonstrated that children who are out of school are significantly vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, and recruitment into delinquent behaviour. Simultaneously, they can function as sources for

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any policy implemented to achieve economic growth and sustainable development, so facilitating a demographic dividend[14].

This process has consistently presented numerous problems to the educational system and the overall development of the country. Regrettably, over 45 percent of out-of-school children in West Africa are Nigerians, representing the highest number of out-of-school children globally[4]. Out-of-school children often face various barriers, such as poverty, child labour, social exclusion, and conflict. Economic hardship is one of the most significant factors contributing to the inability of families to keep their children in school, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. In Nigeria, for instance, the problem of out-of-school children is exacerbated by socio-economic inequalities, child marriages, and poor educational infrastructure. The country's northeast and northwest regions have some of the highest numbers of out-of-school children, driven by insecurity and cultural norms[15].

Child labour is another factor contributing to this issue, where children are compelled to work in both formal and informal sectors to support their families. Various studies have highlighted how school dropout rates are often higher among children who are forced to prioritize earning an income over attending school. In rural areas, children might also be kept out of school due to the need for them to contribute to agricultural activities or care for younger siblings[16].

Conflict and insecurity further compound the issue of out-of-school children. According to the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), many children living in conflict-prone regions are either displaced or live in areas where schools are destroyed or unsafe, resulting in disrupted education systems. In Nigeria’s northern regions, the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency has significantly affected children's access to education, forcing

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many out of school due to safety concerns. Additionally, gender disparities continue to affect educational enrolment. In many cultures, girls are disproportionately affected by early marriage and societal norms that prioritize boys' education over girls'. It has also been noted that girls make up the majority of out-of-school children in countries with significant gender inequality, including Nigeria[17].

Efforts to address the problem of out-of-school children include initiatives like UNESCO's "Education for All" campaign and the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which aims to provide inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Governments and international organizations are working towards ensuring that more children have access to schooling through policies that remove financial barriers, improve school infrastructure, and promote inclusive education for marginalized groups. However, much remains to be done to reduce the global number of out-of-school children and provide these individuals with the opportunities they need for their future development.

Research efforts have increasingly focused on the topic of out-of-school children (OOSC). Numerous research studies have examined the impact of OOSC on the economics, security, and societal development in the respective context. Some have similarly examined the phenomenon to ascertain its impact on the educational systems of continents, countries, states, and societies as a whole. Stakeholders evaluated the strategies employed to enhance education for numerous youngsters in Nigeria. UNICEF (similarly executed a formative evaluation of the Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI)[6]. Various studies have all investigated the concept of out-of-school children in various circumstances. Nevertheless, these current studies have not adequately addressed the situation of Out-Of-School Children in Nigeria, nor have they identified the components and causes of the rising

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numbers, therefore failing to propose a viable solution to the issue.

Children are essential assets to a nation's economic and social progress, acting as custodians of its legacy and future. Maintaining these children's excitement for school is crucial for the preservation and enhancement of a nation's varied development. The PROBE report (1999), highlights that the predominant cause of school dropouts is the child's indifference or perception of irrelevance about their education.

Consequently, while focus is placed on strategic plans developed by governments at various levels, significant attention must be given to children's mental and psychological reactions to educational activities. Although various causes impede the settlement of the out-of-school children crisis in Nigeria, such as cultural superstitions, poverty, and children's apathy, it is indisputable that out-of-school children represent a possible threat to national stability. Moreover, parents profoundly affect their children's educational access and interest; nonetheless, many contemporary parents employ unsuitable methods of indoctrination. This is also contributing to the increasing incidence of out-of-school children in Nigeria.

The existence of out-of-school children in Nigeria poses a substantial impediment to the nation's educational framework and its comprehensive socio-economic advancement. Despite several attempts and interventions, a significant percentage of children in Nigeria remain deprived of formal education. This comprehensive study aims to analyse the core factors, consequences, and potential solutions concerning the issue of school absenteeism among children in Nigeria, emphasizing the need of inclusive and accessible education. The problem of out-of-school children in Nigeria is a complex matter that necessitates a thorough understanding of its magnitude and scope. Nigeria reportedly has one of the

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highest rates of school-aged children not enrolled in education globally. UNICEF and other organizations estimate that a considerable percentage of Nigerian children, particularly in rural and economically disadvantaged areas, are not enrolled in formal educational institutions[18].

The challenge of out-of-school children in Nigeria is exacerbated by numerous structural and systemic issues, with inadequate infrastructure serving as a significant impediment. This issue pertains to a lack of essential educational facilities, classrooms, qualified instructors, and teaching materials, thus obstructing the effective delivery of high-quality education. Furthermore, the problem is exacerbated in regions affected by insurgency or armed conflict, when security concerns create significant obstacles to educational pursuits. Moreover, the pervasive problem of inadequate governance and rampant corruption exacerbates the inequitable allocation of educational resources, leading to a further deterioration in educational quality[19].

Various factors contribute to the elevated incidence of school absenteeism among students in Nigeria. Poverty and economic inequality are recognized as the primary issues hindering families from affording expenses associated with sending their children to school, including the purchase of uniforms, books, and transportation. Cultural and social norms significantly impact the marginalization of some demographics, notably females, from accessing formal education due to entrenched conventions and biases. Significant barriers encompass early marriage, gender bias, and traditional perceptions on children's roles in the household[20].

In some regions of Nigeria, particularly in rural and socioeconomically disadvantaged populations, the absence of sufficient educational infrastructure is a substantial barrier to

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accessing high-quality education. Schools are obligated to operate in overcrowded conditions due to the scarcity of classrooms, which diminishes the quality of the learning environment for students. Dilapidated buildings and a lack of essential amenities intensify the challenges faced by both students and teachers. The scarcity of qualified educators is another significant element exacerbating the inadequate infrastructure, as skilled instructors are vital for providing effective and engaging training. The absence of modern teaching materials and resources hinders the learning process, limiting students' access to up-to-date knowledge and obstructing their overall educational advancement[21].

Moreover, the ramifications of inadequate infrastructure differ nationwide, with regions afflicted by insurgency or armed conflict facing very significant challenges. Security concerns in these areas provide a significant obstacle for parents considering enrolling their children in school. The anticipation of bloodshed, attacks on educational establishments, and the pervasive instability stemming from conflict contribute to a general sense of dread. As a result, parents become hesitant to expose their children to the dangers associated with attending school, exacerbating the problem of school absenteeism.

The issues of inadequate governance and corruption within the education system exacerbate the challenges faced by children who are not enrolled in school. Insufficient governance frameworks and widespread corruption result in the misallocation of educational resources, redirecting funds designated for education to alternative purposes. The lack of transparency and accountability in resource allocation leads to a situation where the intended beneficiaries of educational initiatives are denied the full benefits. Designated funding for school construction and maintenance, provision of needed supplies, and educator training sometimes become misallocated or misused[22].

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Corruption also includes the selection and recruiting process for educators, when positions are occasionally filled by nepotism or bribery rather than by evaluating skills and competencies. This undermines the potential for a robust and effective education system by diminishing the quality of instruction. Inadequate financial management, along with insufficient oversight, results in poor maintenance of schools, inadequate professional development for educators, and a lack of essential educational resources.

The extensive ramifications of these structural challenges significantly exacerbate the persistent problem of out-of-school children in Nigeria. The quality of the educational system declines, leading to a lack of essential skills among youth. As a result, this hinders their ability to secure substantial employment opportunities, so perpetuating the cycle of poverty and obstructing socioeconomic advancement. The decline in educational standards diminishes the nation's human capital, constraining its capacity for innovation and progress.

To effectively address the issue of school absenteeism among children, it is essential to transcend superficial solutions and concentrate on resolving the fundamental challenges within the education sector. Prioritizing robust infrastructure development, ensuring transparency and accountability in resource allocation, and addressing security challenges in conflict-affected areas are crucial for fostering a conducive learning environment. Furthermore, the execution of anti-corruption strategies and the embrace of sound governance practices are essential for ensuring the efficient and effective utilization of educational resources[23].

The consequences of a significant number of youngsters not attending school extend beyond the individual and impact the entire nation. The depletion of human capital

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significantly hinders the nation's ability to realize its full potential for economic growth and development. Another result is increased poverty, as the lack of education perpetuates the cycle of poverty, hence limiting individuals' capacity to attain better employment opportunities. The vulnerability of out-of-school children to exploitation, child labour, and involvement in criminal activities perpetuates a circle of socioeconomic challenges. An illiterate populace may result in less social cohesion, potentially causing social instability and a deficiency in understanding, acceptance, and harmonious coexistence within a multicultural community[24].

The Nigerian government has implemented numerous initiatives and legislations to tackle the challenges associated with out-of-school children, recognizing the gravity of the situation. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Program, launched in 1999, aims to deliver free and compulsory fundamental education to every Nigerian child, focusing on improving accessibility, quality, and relevance. Conditional cash transfer programs incentivize parents to enrol and ensure their children's school attendance by providing financial assistance to families who meet specific educational criteria[18]. School feeding programs aim to enhance attendance rates by providing nutritious meals to students, thereby addressing their educational and nutritional needs. Targeted programs and initiatives are executed to especially enhance the enrolment and retention of girls in educational institutions. The primary objective of these activities is to eradicate cultural barriers and promote gender equality in education. The aim of investing in educational infrastructure, including the construction of new schools, renovation of existing facilities, and provision of necessary resources, is to provide a conducive learning environment[25].

Nonetheless, despite these endeavours, numerous difficulties hinder its proper

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implementation. Inadequate funding is a continual issue that adversely affects the quality of education and the implementation of initiatives. Corruption within the education system can lead to the misallocation of resources, hindering the intended efficacy of programs and policies. The scarcity of skilled educators, coupled with inadequate training, adversely affects the quality of education provided in numerous schools. The implementation of educational projects in areas affected by instability and violent conflict is obstructed by the inherent risks involved. The effectiveness of initiatives is hindered by inadequate community involvement and awareness[18].

Several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society groups in Nigeria are actively partnering with the government to further its initiatives in addressing the issue of out-of-school children. These companies frequently employ innovative techniques to tackle the root causes of the issue. Community-based educational projects engage closely with local populations to create flexible and tailored learning options, especially in rural areas. Mobile education units are dispatched to nomadic and isolated communities, providing educational services to youngsters facing geographical barriers. The objective of advocacy and awareness campaigns is to transform societal ideas on education, emphasizing its importance and encouraging parents to prioritize their children's educational pursuits. Some organizations emphasize imparting vocational and life skills to out-of-school children, so ensuring they possess alternative means for livelihood and economic empowerment[26].

Addressing the issue of children's school absenteeism in Nigeria necessitates a thorough and varied approach. Cooperation among the government, NGOs, and the international community is essential to overcome the challenges hindering the effective implementation

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of educational initiatives. Resource allocation, corruption eradication, enhancement of teacher education, and fostering community engagement are critical strategies to ensure universal access to high-quality and inclusive education for all children in Nigeria. The successful implementation of these measures would transform individual lives and improve the overall advancement and prosperity of the nation.

While majority of the studies on out-of-school children have focused on the Northern part of Nigeria, emerging studies have started highlight the fact that the problem also exists in the southwest of the country. The present prevalence of out-of-school children in Oyo State and the trends seen over the past decade. Oyo State, a prominent region in Nigeria, has a significant prevalence of out-of-school children, a challenge that mirrors the broader educational landscape of the country. The issue of children's non-participation in formal education is intricate and beyond mere numerical assessments, impacting both individuals and society at large. This debate will examine the factors influencing school non-attendance among students in Oyo State over the past decade. A comprehensive evaluation, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative elements, is crucial to understand the complexities related to the phenomenon of school absenteeism among children in the state[27].

Precisely ascertaining the precise number of children not enrolled in school in Oyo State is a challenging task, as disparate sources and methodologies may yield divergent outcomes. Nonetheless, it is well acknowledged that the number is substantial, having the capacity to attain several hundred thousand. Indeed, recent statistics indicates that 20% of children that are supposed to be in school in Oyo State are not[28]. While statistics in Nigeria are often disputed, this figure shows a significant problem. The consequences of a significant

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population of undereducated youth extend beyond the local educational context. It influences the societal framework, economic progress, and overall development of the state. The absence of educational opportunities and the unutilized potential of individuals lacking education result in the forfeiture of societal advantages associated with a well-educated populace.

To comprehensively evaluate the amount of school absenteeism among students in Oyo State, it is essential to consider both qualitative and quantitative criteria. This involves analysing statistical data, enrolment figures, and demographic trends. It involves understanding the socioeconomic, cultural, and infrastructural factors that contribute to children's school non-attendance. Over the past decade, various interrelated factors have shaped the educational landscape in Oyo State and influenced the rate of school absenteeism among pupils.

A significant quantitative factor is the state's population growth. The population growth necessitates an expansion of educational facilities. An insufficient response to the rising demand leads to a shortfall in educational service delivery, consequently excluding children from the official school system. The state's educational resources are under considerable strain due to increased urbanization and an increasing population, particularly in metropolitan areas where access to high-quality education is challenging[29].

Another critical factor to evaluate is the state of the educational infrastructure. Robust educational infrastructure, with adequately equipped classrooms and instructional materials, is essential for accommodating a growing student population. Inadequate funding for educational infrastructure and insufficient maintenance of existing institutions results in restricted access to high-quality education. Inadequate infrastructure

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disproportionately affects children in rural areas, where the availability of schools is scarce and the quality of education frequently falls short[30].

Furthermore, economic factors significantly influence children's school attendance. Poverty continues to significantly hinder education in Oyo State. Households struggling to meet basic needs may choose the immediate financial support from their children above long-term investments in education. Economically disadvantaged families may perceive the expenses associated with education, including uniforms, textbooks, and transportation, as onerous. As a result, children from these households are more likely to be excluded from formal education. Familial educational choices may be shaped by cultural and communal norms. Conventional views and conventions can occasionally obstruct educational chances for specific demographics, particularly young ladies. Premature marriage and gender discrimination may lead to the withdrawal of young females from educational institutions, perpetuating a cycle of limited opportunities and exacerbating gender inequalities. To effectively tackle the issue of children's school absenteeism, it is essential to challenge and interrogate these cultural norms to promote educational inclusion[31].

The quality of schooling substantially affects its attractiveness to parents. The perception of inadequate quality in public schools may motivate parents to seek alternative educational opportunities or choose homeschooling. This is particularly relevant in Oyo State, where a combination of factors such as a shortage of educators, inadequate training, and a lack of modern teaching resources may result in a decline in the perceived quality of education. The interaction between educational policy and governance in Oyo State significantly contributes to the elevated percentage of children not enrolled in school. Insufficient policies, coupled with issues in implementation and oversight, may result in the

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misallocation of resources and the inefficient expenditure of available funds. Corruption within the education system may exacerbate these challenges by diverting resources meant for education to alternative purposes[32].

Over the past decade, efforts have been made at both state and federal levels to address the issue of school absenteeism among students in Nigeria, particularly in Oyo State. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) program, launched in 1999, aims to deliver free and compulsory primary education to all children in Nigeria. However, the program's effectiveness is hindered by persistent challenges in execution, financial distribution, and oversight. A crucial aspect of understanding the challenges faced by out-of-school children, especially in rural areas, in accessing formal education is to analyse the impact of educational facilities and accessibility on their demographic. Rural communities sometimes encounter a substantial lack of educational institutions, sufficient school infrastructure, qualified educators, and essential resources such as drinkable water and sanitation facilities. The deficiency of adequate infrastructure poses significant challenges for kids in these areas, impeding their access to excellent education and resulting in a higher rate of youngsters not participating in formal schooling[33].

The deficiency of educational institutions in rural areas is a considerable issue. Many rural communities lack basic educational facilities, forcing youth to embark on difficult treks to obtain an education. The absence of nearby educational institutions may provide a significant barrier, particularly for young children who may struggle to commute to distant schools. Moreover, the inadequate number of educational institutions sometimes results in overcrowded classes, thereby diminishing the quality of instruction and the overall educational experience[34].

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The educational infrastructure is a crucial component. Many rural schools have crumbling infrastructure, insufficient classrooms, and a lack of essential facilities. The deficiency of sufficient infrastructure adversely affects the learning environment, rendering it less conducive to effective instruction. Inadequate infrastructure may result in schools lacking essential teaching resources, such as textbooks and instructional materials, hence hindering the learning process for students.

The scarcity of proficient educators is a persistent issue in rural areas. Seasoned educators may be reluctant to accept positions in remote locations due to a lack of amenities, limited career opportunities, and diminished quality of life. As a result, numerous rural schools are staffed with poorly trained or inexperienced teachers, therefore diminishing the quality of education provided. The deficiency of skilled educators undermines educational quality, hindering pupils' academic progress and maybe leading to a higher rate of premature school departures[28].

An important aspect of educational infrastructure is the provision of essential resources, like potable water and sanitation facilities. Many rural schools lack essential amenities, like potable water and sufficient sanitation facilities. The absence of these services not only subjects' students to health risks but also creates an unpleasant and unclean environment, thereby discouraging consistent attendance. The cumulative impact of these barriers significantly hinders the enrolment and retention of children in formal education in rural areas. Insufficient infrastructure generates obstacles that lead to a higher percentage of children not attending school, hence perpetuating educational disparities between urban and rural areas[23].

Cultural norms and behaviours profoundly influence school dropout rates, particularly

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concerning early marriages, which disproportionately affect girls. The enrolment and retention of girls in educational institutions are impeded in numerous rural regions due to entrenched attitudes regarding women's roles and the prioritization of marriage over academic endeavours. These entrenched practices sustain gender disparities in education, resulting in a significant number of youth, particularly girls, being deprived of educational chances.

The phenomenon of early marriages, frequently shaped by cultural norms and economic factors, profoundly impacts the educational trajectories of females. Certain families may prioritize early marriage for their daughters, perceiving it as a cultural obligation or a means to ensure financial stability through dowries. Consequently, females are forced to prematurely discontinue their education to fulfil cultural expectations on marriage and familial obligations. The consequences of early marriages extend beyond only disrupting the educational paths of females. Adolescent brides may have increased health risks, limited economic opportunities, and greater vulnerability to poverty. The perpetuation of this cycle exacerbates gender inequities, as boys are not subjected to comparable pressures to prioritize marriage over education[35].

The compliance with conventional gender norms and expectations results in disparities in educational opportunities. Some cultures maintain that women bear the primary responsibility for household duties, encompassing family care and domestic management. This mindset frequently diminishes the perceived value of educating females, leading to a reduced allocation of resources for their education relative to that of males. The perpetuation of these entrenched practices sustains gender disparities in education, resulting in a significant proportion of children, particularly girls, being deprived of

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educational chances[36].

To effectively address the impact of cultural norms on school dropout rates, it is crucial to undertake community engagement efforts and awareness programs that critically examine traditional perspectives on gender roles. Empowering communities to recognize the significance of educating girls and promoting the lasting benefits of female education may facilitate a transformation of cultural norms. Moreover, it is imperative to implement and maintain legislation that protect the educational rights of children, especially girls. Governments and local authorities must collaborate with communities to eliminate barriers to education, including issues related to early marriages and gender-based discrimination[37].

The pervasive problem of insufficient understanding of the significance of education may exacerbate the issue of youngsters not enrolled in school. Certain families, particularly those facing socio-economic difficulties, may lack awareness of the long-term benefits of education or may prioritize child labour or income generation over formal schooling. The lack of understanding underscores the necessity of engaging in educational activism and outreach initiatives aimed at informing parents and guardians about the substantial transformative power of education.

Families living in socioeconomically disadvantaged neighbourhoods sometimes emphasize urgent economic needs over the long-term advantages of education. The cycle of poverty frequently perpetuates this mindset, leading parents to prioritize immediate financial contributions from their children's labour over education. This perspective is particularly prevalent in areas where families struggle to meet basic needs, rendering the notion of sending children to school a perceived privilege[38]. The main aim of educational outreach initiatives should be to dispel misconceptions and highlight the tangible benefits

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of education for individuals and communities. Emphasizing the robust correlation between education and favourable socio-economic outcomes, enhanced health, and augmented future work opportunities might transform individuals' viewpoints. Moreover, showcasing success narratives of individuals who have overcome socio-economic challenges through education may serve as persuasive motivators for families to emphasize formal education.

Insufficient awareness can be effectively mitigated by strong community engagement. Local leaders, community influencers, and educators possess the capacity to significantly disseminate awareness regarding the profound effects of education. Facilitating workshops, awareness campaigns, and interactive sessions can promote candid dialogues within communities, enabling the exploration of issues and emphasizing the lasting advantages of education for individuals and society as a whole. Criticism has been aimed at the effectiveness of government initiatives and policies addressing the issue of out-of-school children in Oyo State. Projects designed to enhance educational accessibility have encountered limitations due to challenges in resource allocation, implementation inefficiencies, and occurrences of corruption, despite dedicated efforts[39].

A significant challenge is the equitable distribution of resources, both financial and infrastructural, throughout different regions of the state. Inequities in resource allocation may result in certain regions receiving greater attention and advancement, while others remain deficient in assistance. This difference contributes to a lack of equitable opportunities for all students, exacerbating the prevalence of school absenteeism in certain areas. Implementation inefficiencies provide a substantial impediment. Government projects may have challenges in attaining their objectives due to bureaucratic hurdles, administrative barriers, and insufficient collaboration among many parties. These

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inefficiencies may result in delays, incomplete implementation, and an inadequate distribution of benefits to the intended beneficiaries[40].

The efficacy of these actions may be obstructed by systemic deficiencies, which could impede their execution, oversight, and evaluation. Inadequate data collection and monitoring mechanisms may result in a lack of accurate understanding of the actual impacts of these programs. Without thorough monitoring and evaluation, assessing the effectiveness of therapies and making informed decisions for future improvements becomes challenging. To address these challenges, a comprehensive assessment and restructuring of government programs aimed at addressing school absenteeism among children is essential. The strategy must encompass a thorough assessment of resource distribution, effective execution protocols, and stringent measures to combat corruption inside the school system.

Fostering transparency and accountability in resource allocation is essential to ensure that funds are directed to their intended recipients. Employing technology-driven solutions for monitoring and evaluation may improve data accuracy and offer prompt insights into the efficacy of educational initiatives. Furthermore, involving local communities in the design and implementation of programs may enhance their effectiveness by tailoring interventions to meet the specific needs and challenges faced by each community. Collaborating with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international agencies can furnish government-led initiatives with additional expertise, resources, and oversight. These collaborations may improve a complete and sustainable strategy for addressing the intricate issue of school absenteeism among youngsters[34].

2.1.2 Child Insecurity

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Child insecurity refers to the vulnerability and risks that children face, which can impede their physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development. It encompasses a wide range of factors that contribute to the insecurity of children, including violence, neglect, poverty, displacement, and lack of access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and nutrition. Child insecurity can manifest in various forms, such as child abuse, exploitation, trafficking, child labour, and exposure to conflict and environmental disasters[41].

In many contexts, child insecurity is closely linked to socio-economic conditions and systemic failures in protecting children's rights. Poverty, for instance, can lead to a lack of access to basic needs like food, shelter, and healthcare, making children more susceptible to malnutrition, illness, and early mortality. Furthermore, in regions affected by conflict, children are often displaced, separated from their families, and exposed to physical harm, psychological trauma, and exploitation. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) underscores the importance of providing children with a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment where they can grow and thrive. However, in many parts of the world, including regions in Nigeria, child insecurity remains a significant issue, driven by poverty, conflict, and weak social protection systems[42].

For example, in Nigeria, children in conflict-prone areas such as the Northeast, where insurgent groups like Boko Haram operate, are highly vulnerable to insecurity. These children often experience displacement, loss of family members, and lack of access to education and healthcare, which exacerbates their insecurity. Additionally, child insecurity is also prevalent in urban slums and rural areas where poverty is rampant, leading to issues like child labour, trafficking, and early marriage[43].

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Addressing child insecurity requires a multi-faceted approach that includes strengthening legal frameworks for child protection, improving access to education and healthcare, and providing social support systems for vulnerable families. International organizations like UNICEF, Save the Children, and the World Health Organization (WHO) work in collaboration with governments to mitigate these risks and provide safe environments for children, but more targeted and localized interventions are needed to tackle the root causes of child insecurity in regions like Nigeria.

The correlation between economic issues and the increasing insecurity in South-West Nigeria is a crucial aspect that requires thorough scrutiny. The region's vulnerability is mostly driven by the significant levels of unemployment, especially among the young. The scarcity of feasible economic prospects not only intensifies social turmoil but also fosters an environment conducive to criminal behaviour.

Unemployment, particularly among the younger population, is a significant factor contributing to social unrest. A substantial segment of the population feels disillusioned and marginalized due to the absence of viable work opportunities. This particular group, characterized by an abundance of vitality and ambitions, is actively searching for opportunities to ensure their economic well-being. When people don't have legal options, they are frequently forced to participate in illegal activities in order to support themselves. Many individuals are frequently drawn to illicit activities due to the appeal of rapid cash profits, disregarding the potential legal and ethical consequences.

The problem is exacerbated by the prevalence of poverty, which serves as a stimulus for criminal groups. Individuals living in poverty, who lack access to essential resources and opportunities, are more vulnerable to being recruited by criminal organizations that offer

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economic assistance. Criminal syndicates capitalize on the susceptibility stemming from destitution, creating a pernicious cycle in which poverty engenders criminal activity, and criminal activity, in turn, perpetuates poverty.

The South-West region of Nigeria is characterized by a complex interweaving of ethnic and religious conflicts, which contribute to a pervasive sense of insecurity in the area. The region's security difficulties are significantly influenced by communal fights and farmer-herder conflicts, which are rooted in long-standing grievances, land disputes, and rivalry for resources. The previously inactive tensions have been intensified by several reasons, hence exacerbating the increase in violence.

Historical grievances have a strong impact, reviving and intensifying current conflicts. Land disputes, often associated with past injustices or unresolved assertions, serve as catalysts for hostilities. The battle for limited resources is intensified by environmental changes and population expansion, resulting in increased conflicts among diverse populations. Within this unpredictable combination, illicit factions find fertile terrain to manipulate preexisting divisions and continue acts of aggression.

The presence of religious conflicts, which are often linked with ethnic dynamics, adds an additional level of intricacy to the security scene. The collision of religious convictions, intensified by radical ideologies, fosters an atmosphere of suspicion and animosity. These conflicts are deftly used by criminal forces aiming to corrupt and dominate communities for their own benefit. The interaction between religious and ethnic divisions acts as a distraction for criminal endeavours, deflecting attention away from their illegal actions.

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The existence of political instability, marked by ineffective government, corruption, and political violence, exacerbates the difficulties encountered in tackling insecurity in the South-West region of Nigeria. Inadequate governance fosters an environment where criminal entities may thrive without facing significant consequences, since they are protected by the widespread inefficiency and corruption inside governmental systems.

The presence of corruption among security personnel is a significant barrier to the successful implementation of law enforcement. The loss of public faith in security institutions arises from corrupt behaviours, which undermine the credibility and legitimacy of these agencies. The breakdown of trust leads to a disconnect between the security personnel and the populace they are supposed to safeguard, enabling criminal groups to take advantage of the following chaos.

The situation is further aggravated by insufficient training and funding for security officers. Law enforcement organizations have significant challenges in efficiently addressing rising security risks due to a lack of essential expertise, equipment, and assistance. Criminal syndicates, cognizant of these vulnerabilities, exploit the loopholes within the security apparatus, enhancing the durability and complexity of their illicit operations, so impeding their dismantlement.

The widespread distribution of tiny firearms and lightweight weaponry, assisted by the illegal trade of weapons, is identified as a crucial element that exacerbates conflicts and criminal activity. Inadequate governance systems, along with easily crossed borders, provide a climate that facilitates the influx of illegal weapons. These weapons, often obtained by crime syndicates, provide them increased firepower, making them strong opponents for law enforcement authorities and increasing the level of violence in the area.

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The repercussions of the increasing insecurity in South-West Nigeria resonate in several domains, including humanitarian, economic, social, and educational aspects. Every aspect presents a bleak portrayal of the difficulties encountered in the area, emphasizing the immediate need for thorough and planned initiatives.

An immediate and severe consequence of the increasing insecurity is the loss of life due to violent conflicts, abductions, and other illicit actions. Communities in the South-West region of Nigeria are trapped in a recurring pattern of violence, resulting in the unfortunate loss of innocent lives caught in the midst of conflict. The impact on human lives is incalculable, causing immense devastation to families and inflicting severe psychological distress on communities.

Internal displacement is a harsh reality that occurs when communities are compelled to leave their homes in order to find safety. The displacement issue adds an additional level of intricacy to the humanitarian situation, as internally displaced individuals encounter not only the imminent danger of violence but also the difficulties of obtaining housing, sustenance, and medical assistance in new surroundings. The displacement causes significant disruptions to social structures, places a strain on resources within host communities, and presents long-term issues for the people impacted by it.

The economic consequences of insecurity in South-West Nigeria are significant and extensive. The cessation of economic activity, including agriculture, commerce, and tourism, precipitates a substantial economic decline in the area. Due to security worries, farmers are unable to attend to their crops, resulting in crop losses that exacerbate food shortages. The trade routes have become dangerous, causing difficulties in transporting products and slowing down the economic prosperity that the area formerly experienced.

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Investor trust significantly declines as the perceived lack of security discourages prospective investors from investing cash in the area. The business climate becomes filled with unpredictable factors, and the attractiveness of the South-West as a place to invest decreases. The region's issues are worsened by the hindrance of economic growth and development that may be stimulated by private sector investment.

Ethnolinguistic disputes in South-West Nigeria are placing major pressure on the region's social fabric. The present surge of insecurity intensifies existing historical fault lines, resulting in tensions among groups. The formerly amicable cohabitation in the area has been gradually undermined, giving way to a climate of distrust and suspicion. Ethnolinguistic identities serve as catalysts for conflict, exacerbating societal divides.

The collapse of societal structures is worsened by the distrust in the government, which arises from its perceived incompetence in properly addressing security concerns. Communities, faced with the consequences of insecurity, may adopt an introspective approach, depending on local networks for assistance while isolating themselves from wider social frameworks. The gradual decline of social unity has consequences for the region's collective resilience, impeding its capacity to come together in the face of shared difficulties.

The educational sector is heavily impacted by the increasing instability, necessitating the closure of schools in some locations to ensure the protection of children and staff. The refusal to provide children in impacted regions the opportunity to get an education impedes the growth of human resources, hence continuing a cycle of impoverishment and constraining future prospects. The upheavals in the educational sector lead to the

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emergence of a generation that is at risk of not acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills due to impaired learning conditions.

The severe consequences on human capital, a crucial catalyst for economic progress, are long-lasting. An education system lacking in quality may impede the ability of a generation to make significant contributions to the labour market, hence impeding the potential for innovation and progress in the area. The educational ramifications of insecurity go beyond the temporary shutdown of schools; they significantly influence the course of the region's development for many years to follow.

In addition to the concrete repercussions, the whole reputation of the South-West area is negatively impacted both domestically and globally. The region's reputation is negatively affected by the idea of insecurity, which diminishes the value of its historical and cultural worth. The adverse depiction in the media and public discussion exacerbates the difficulties encountered by the area.

Globally, the perceived lack of security in the South-West region of Nigeria has the potential to discourage foreign investments, tourism, and diplomatic interactions. The area, once renowned for its rich cultural history and significant economic achievements, now faces a challenge in terms of its reputation, which hinders its complete engagement in the global sphere. The region's population face obstacles in cooperation, collaborations, and possibilities due to the tainted image.

2.1.2.1 The Impact of Insecurity on Access to Education

The recurrent incidence of school assaults in Oyo State, Nigeria, during the last 10 years has had a profound influence on the educational environment, significantly affecting the

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attendance rates of students and their ability to achieve educational objectives. The intricate interaction between ethno-religious conflicts, rural criminal activities, and conflicts between farmers and herders has resulted in an environment of fear and instability, significantly hindering the advancement of educational initiatives in the state.

Oyo State, like to other areas in Nigeria, has been confronted with a significant increase in insecurity driven by ethno-religious disputes, rural banditry, and conflicts between farmers and herders. The consequences of this lack of security are most apparent in the educational field, where schools have been regular targets of assaults. Armed people or organizations, with the intention of promoting their own interests or spreading terror, have resorted to using guns into educational facilities. The repercussions are severe, including fatalities, abductions, and substantial damage to infrastructure.

The acts of hostility carried out in school assaults provide a tangible threat to both students and instructors. The educational milieu, often seen as a sanctuary for cognitive and individual growth, has been tainted by acts of violence. This not only endangers the physical well-being of individuals inside the school grounds but also causes psychological distress that might have long-term consequences on the educational community.

The pervasive feeling of vulnerability induced by school assaults has significant ramifications for student attendance. At first, these acts of aggression instil worry and unease among parents and guardians. The safety of their children in the classroom is a top priority. The concept that educational institutions, which are intended to foster and educate, might be vulnerable to acts of violence undermines the basic confidence that parents have in the educational system.

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As a result, a considerable proportion of parents choose fear-driven absenteeism, deciding to keep their children at home instead of jeopardizing their safety by sending them to school. This phenomenon has concrete consequences for the total rates of attendance in schools across Oyo State. Parents' reluctance to trust the safety of their children in an environment regarded as more and more unsafe stems from the dread of possible assaults.

In exceptional circumstances, some parents opt for homeschooling as a substitute, completely removing their children from conventional education. Homeschooling, driven by a concern for safeguarding children from school assaults, denies them the organized educational setting offered by conventional academic establishments. The variability in the quality of education provided in a family environment may greatly contribute to variations in educational achievements.

The ramifications of the widespread occurrence of school assaults extend beyond the immediate issues related to student attendance. The educational objectives and ambitions are severely disrupted, as pupils are unable to continue their studies in a favourable learning atmosphere. Insecurity disrupts the educators' capacity to provide a stable and supportive environment for academic development due to the instability it causes.

The enduring ramifications are significant, impacting the course of individual livelihoods and the overall development of the community. Individuals who are unable to attend school owing to fear-related absences or being educated at home may have difficulties in obtaining fundamental abilities and information necessary for their personal and vocational growth. This interruption in their educational trajectory might prolong cycles of poverty and restrict prospects for upward social advancement.

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The recurrent incidence of school assaults fosters a more extensive feeling of mistrust throughout the society. The gradual deterioration of confidence in the safety and security of educational institutions leads to divisions in the social structure. Communities, dealing with the distress and unpredictability caused by these assaults, can become divided, which would hinder their joint endeavours to tackle wider social issues.

The government's reaction to the sudden increase in school assaults is vital in reducing the negative effects on education in Oyo State. Implementing prompt initiatives, such as enhancing security infrastructure in schools, sending law enforcement agencies to susceptible locations, and executing community involvement programs, may foster a perception of safety. Nevertheless, these actions should be included into a comprehensive and enduring plan that tackles the fundamental reasons for the lack of security.

To effectively tackle the underlying reasons, it is necessary to adopt a comprehensive strategy that encompasses community involvement, open discussions, and socio-economic development programs. Ethno-religious conflicts, rural criminal activities, and conflicts between farmers and herders often arise from underlying social problems, such as economic inequalities, historical resentments, and rivalry for resources. Oyo State may strive towards creating a more robust and safer educational environment by supporting equitable development, developing economic possibilities, and resolving fundamental complaints.

The ramifications of school assaults on the psychological well-being of children, instructors, and the wider community are significant and should not be underestimated. Allocating resources towards mental health support services, counselling programs, and trauma rehabilitation may aid in the recovery of the psychological harm caused by these

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acts of violence. Establishing secure environments for open conversation and cultivating a mindset of adaptability may assist communities in managing the consequences of school assaults.

Oyo State may get advantages from engaging in international cooperation and exchanging expertise in its quest for sustainable solutions. Gaining insights from the experiences of places that have effectively addressed comparable difficulties, implementing optimal strategies to improve school security, and using international knowledge in conflict resolution and community development may strengthen local initiatives.

Violent incidents occurring in school environments have a profound and troubling impact on both students and instructors. The significant repercussions of such occurrences on those who have either personally encountered or seen them go beyond the immediate danger, resulting in enduring psychological distress. This psychological distress, marked by emotions of unease, apprehension, and a resistance to re-enter educational establishments, might hinder academic advancement long after the immediate danger has passed.

For children, the consequences of traumatic incidents in school environments extend beyond the physical wounds. The psychological burden might emerge in diverse manners, impeding their capacity to participate in educational endeavours. The presence of worry and dread may generate a hostile psychological atmosphere, so impeding students' ability to focus on their academic pursuits. The hesitancy to return to educational institutions is a physical obstacle, as the traumatized youngster links the learning environment with a feeling of danger.

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The persistent quality of psychological trauma implies that its influence persists much after the cessation of the acute danger. Children who have encountered violence in their school environments may have challenges in developing trust, which may hinder their ability to establish positive connections with their classmates and instructors. Consequently, this might have an impact on their general welfare and social growth.

Furthermore, the shutting down of schools, whether it be for a short period or permanently, exacerbates the difficulties experienced by children who have undergone trauma. Educational institutions may be compelled to close due to factors such as school infrastructure damage, teaching staff leave, and interruption of routine operations. The closing of schools not only hinders the learning process but also restricts access to secure environments where children may get assistance and therapy to manage the psychological consequences of violence.

Although much attention is often given to the primary targets of violence, educators, who have a crucial influence on the development of young people, also experience the negative impact of such occurrences. The influence on the welfare and occupational life of teachers is of utmost significance. Violence in educational environments may lead to burnout among educators, causing them to question their dedication to a career that lacks stability and security.

Teachers, who are confronted with the combined obstacles of student hostility and anxieties over personal security, may have growing difficulties in creating the caring and encouraging atmosphere essential for successful instruction and education. Teachers may exhibit increased levels of stress, emotional fatigue, and a reduced feeling of professional competence as a result of the trauma they have encountered. In exceptional circumstances,

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educators may choose to abandon their profession, therefore intensifying the already scarcity of competent instructors.

The exodus of seasoned and committed instructors poses a substantial obstacle to children's achievement of top-notch education. The departure of teachers may result in a decrease in the overall standard of education, since the invaluable institutional knowledge and skills of experienced educators cannot be replaced. The absence of consistent teaching personnel might impede students' educational trajectory, impeding their scholastic advancement and holistic growth.

To effectively tackle the significant influence of violence in educational environments, it is necessary to adopt a comprehensive and multifaceted strategy. It is of utmost importance to acknowledge and alleviate the psychological distress that youngsters go through. This entails the implementation of counselling and support services inside educational institutions, the establishment of secure environments for open conversation, and the cultivation of a culture characterized by resilience and empathy.

Efforts to mitigate violence in educational settings should also include efforts to bolster school security, provide training for educators on conflict resolution and stress management, and collaborate with communities to tackle underlying problems that may lead to such instances. Establishing a cohesive network that encompasses parents, educators, and community influencers is crucial for cultivating a safeguarded atmosphere for children.

Furthermore, prioritizing the mental health and well-being of educators should be a central focus in any holistic plan. Essential measures for avoiding burnout and retaining

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experienced instructors include granting access to counselling services, providing training on stress management and coping methods, and establishing a supportive work atmosphere. In addition, endeavours aimed at tackling the underlying causes of violence, like as community development programs and conflict resolution projects, have a role in establishing a more stable and secure educational environment.

2.1.3 The Rights of the Child in the Society

The term 'right' is often used to describe any advantages conferred on a person by a rule of law. Different jurists have put forward many theories in order to explain the term 'right'. A scholar asserted that a right is a kind of claim. Another scholar asserted that the behaviour of one person is the substrate, which the right of another is founded[8]. Rights are interest or benefit recognized by law. A scholar conceives rights as essentially powers and these rights are protected choices[9].

Thus, the concept of rights implies a relationship between two or more persons. Man can only have a right through the society and by implication by entering into relations with other men. It is therefore man's existence within the society that accords him the status of a human being, which ultimately entitles him to some rights as a consequence of his humanity. The Supreme Court of Nigeria in the case of Odogu V. Attorney General of the Federation held that a fundamental right is a right guaranteed in the constitution which every person is entitled to enjoy by virtue of being a human being. Thus, if every person who is human is entitled to some rights, then children are also entitled to human rights by virtue of the fact that they are human beings. Under S (307) of The Nigerian Criminal Code (1990), a person is considered to be a human being from the moment he becomes

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independent of his mother's womb, whether the umbilical cord has been severed or not, at birth[10].

Children's rights therefore, are rights that make for their survival, development, protection and meaningful participation in the society. Over the centuries, these rights have been violated. Children of tender age are employed in industries, recruited into the army during wars, trafficked in commercial sex industry and a good number have died due to malnutrition. These violations and abuses have necessitated the formulation of the Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC) in 1989, the African Charter on the Right and Welfare of the Child in 1990 and the Child's Rights Act 2003[11]. In these laws, children's rights have been entrenched in order that they may have the force of law.

2.1.4 Evolution of Children's Rights and Impact on Development

It is to be noted that the concept that children have specific rights deserving of enforcement and protection is a relatively modern development. Children have long constituted an invisible force in history. In line with scholars the children were at the bottom of the social scale despite the fact that they are human beings with human needs, most adults seldom have these at their minds while dealing with children[12]. The popular assumption in time past was that most adults and parents in particular had the best interest of children at heart, thus there was no need to think in terms of children's rights[13]. Violence against children had existed since the early times. Children were killed, abandoned, beaten, sexually abused, thrown into rivers, and exposed on hills and roadsides. Even as late as the 1890s, dead infants were still a common sight in London streets[14]. Although an early law of 374 A.D in Rome declared the killing of an infant to be murder, the legal reality differed from social reality.

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The killing of illegitimate children, continued until the nineteenth century[15]. Sale of children was another longstanding practice. Child sale was legal in Babylonian times. Child sale continued into the modern era despite ancient Athenian laws which restricted the rights of parents to sell children and the efforts of the Catholic Church to eradicate the practice[16]. The contemporary attitude that a child has rights with a concomitant concern for his or her welfare and happiness, finally took root in the eighteenth centuries in Western Europe. Several factors combined to this modern concept of childhood becoming a valued social status and they include the writings of social philosophers, the replacement of apprenticeship by the growth of schools, and increasing privacy of the family[16].

Before this change in the social status of the child, a child's legal status was subsumed in the father. The Roman Partria Potesta epitomized this doctrine of the child as paternal property. This notion persisted well into the modern era thus the Puissance Paternellie of the French Civil Code gave the father unchecked authority over children with exclusively paternal rights. German legislations reflected on this concept of paternal authority. The German code of 1896 gave a husband the right to decide all matters of matrimonial life, thus, mothers had no right to the custody of minors or administration of minors' property. However, as women's position in the family gradually altered, the doctrine of paternal authority was weakened as well as that of the child as paternal property. Under French law, the historic principle "husband is the head of the family" was replaced by "the spouses together assume the moral and material direction of the family". Also, the German Civil Code at the end of the nineteenth century expressly provided that both parents had to exercise their parental powers for the well being of the child. Thus, by the end of the nineteenth century, the benevolent exercise of parental power had become an articulate and

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explicit requirement. The gains of this new status of the child saw the introduction of child labour laws compulsory education. Child labour regulations restricted the number of hours per day during which minors could be employed and regulated their working conditions[16]. The English Factories Act (1833) provided salaried inspectors to enforce labour regulations. From this dates there was social concern about the exploitation of children and compulsory education laws that provided new educational opportunities for children were enacted. These gains are just being seen in Africa. The reason being that the legal framework for children's rights is just developing. However, with laws such as the African Charter or the Rights and Welfare of the Child of 1990 and the Child's Rights Act 2003, the sky is the limit.

2.1.5 Child's Rights Act and Sustainable Development

The legal framework for the protection of children's rights in Nigeria before the enactment of the Child's Rights Act 2003 was weak and uncoordinated. Laws relating to children were not child's rights-specific nor did they make adequate provision of children's rights. The federal constitutional arrangement does not situate issues concerning children within the legislative preview of the National Assembly but within state legislatures thereby making it difficult to establish an adequate legal framework applicable to the whole of Nigeria. Likewise, the various states, children and young persons' laws are largely juvenile justice administration biased and not necessarily child's rights-specific. This resulted in serious consequences for the Nigerian child as all manner of evils were perpetrated against

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children. This ranged from physical abuse to child labour and harmful traditional practices and customs[17].

With the enactment of the Child's Rights Act, the welfare and responsibilities of children as well as those of government and institutions towards children became more defined. In addition, the Act makes provision for the enforcement of these rights by imposing strict penalties for abuses, creation of the Family Court, and bringing of Nigeria's child's rights law to global standard. These rights can be classified into survival rights, development rights, participation rights and protection rights. Under survival rights, children have the right to life; survival and development4; health and health services; dignity of the child and freedom from discrimination.

Under development rights, they have the right to leisure, recreation and cultural activities8; to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; to free, compulsory and universal primary education10; to parental care, protection and maintenance1. Under participation right, they have the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly; freedom of expression13; freedom of movement14; right to personal liberty15; and under protection right, there is the right of the child in need of special protection16; right of the unborn child to protection against harm[17]; and contractual right of a child18. No doubt, this is Nigeria's greatest gift to children and this must not be allowed to waste. Therefore, it is germane that Child's Rights Implementation Committees at the national, state, local government, work towards realizing these rights. It is also pertinent for the different states to enact their own Child's Right Laws as the president has urged[18].

It must be borne in mind that the greatest assets which we have today as a nation is not the oil deposits of the Niger-Delta, neither is it the mangrove and rain forest stretching from

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Lagos to Calabar. Rather the greatest untapped and reserved resources, which we have as a nation, is our teeming children and youthful population, here lies our greatest potential, strength and hope. Almost everywhere in the world, theoretical and empirical reviews show that the children and youth hold enormous potentials for societal transformation and development. But children can hardly assume this front seat without adequate preparations, education, industrialization, genuine invitation as well as support from the society, particularly support from those in power. Certainly, a lot still needs to be done with our teeming children and youthful population if we want genuine development and sustainability.

The Tanzanian President, Julius Nyerere has once been quoted as saying that "whoever controls the minds of children also controls their future". People have been guilty of many errors and many faults, the worst being the abandoning of children, thereby neglecting the foundations of life. Many of the things we need can wait. The child cannot. Now is the time the child's bones are being formed, his blood is being developed, to him we cannot answer "Tomorrow". His name is "Today"[19]. With the Child's Right Act, the authors believe Nigeria has a future. The more we invest in the children, the more we are investing in our future. It must be noted that there can be no sustainability if there are no persons to manage tomorrow's resources. The quality of our nation's future is directly proportional to the quality of our children, today.

2.1.6 Domestication of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: The Child's Rights Act

The Convention on the Rights of the child enjoins that "Member States shall undertake to disseminate the Conventions principles and take all appropriate legislative, administrative

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and other measures for the implementation of the Rights recognized in the present Convention."

Against this background, a draft Child's Rights Bill aimed at principally enacting into Law in Nigeria the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the AU Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child was prepared in the early 90's. But it is only after about ten years with several Heads of Government and heated debates by the Parliamentarians that the Bill was eventually passed into Law by the National Assembly in July 2003. It was assented to by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in September 2003, and promulgated as the Child's Rights Act 2003[20].

2.1.7 Structure and Content of the Child Right Act

The structure of the Child's Rights Act 2003 (CRA) has been informed by the mandate to provide a legislation which incorporates all the rights and responsibilities of children, and which consolidates all laws relating to children into one single legislation, as well as specifying the duties and obligations of government, parents and other authorities, organizations and bodies[21].

2.1.7.1 Definition of a Child by the Act

The Act defines a child as one who is below the age of eighteen years. It categorically provides that such a child's best interests shall remain paramount in all considerations. A child shall be given such protection and care as is necessary for its wellbeing, retaining the right to survival and development and to a name and registration at birth[22].

2.1.7.2 Basic Provisions of the Child Right Act

- Provisions of freedom from discrimination on the grounds of belonging to a particular community or ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion, the

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circumstances of birth, disability, deprivation or political opinion; and it is stated categorically that the dignity of the child shall be respected at all times.

- No Nigerian child shall be subjected to physical, mental or emotional injury, abuse or neglect, maltreatment, torture, inhuman or degrading punishment, attacks on his/her honour or reputation.

- Every Nigerian child is entitled to rest, leisure and enjoyment of the best attainable state of physical, mental and spiritual health.

- Every government in Nigeria shall strive to reduce infant mortality rate, provide medical and health care, adequate nutrition and safe drinking water, hygienic and sanitized environments, combat diseases and malnutrition, support and mobilize through local and community resources, the development of primary health care for children.

- Provisions for children in need of special protection measures (mentally, physically challenged, or street children): they are protected in a manner that would enable them achieve their fullest, possible social integration, and moral development.
- Expectant and nursing mothers shall be catered for, and every parent or guardian having legal custody of a child under the age of two years shall ensure its immunization against diseases, or face judicial penalties. • Betrothal and marriage of children are prohibited.

- Causing tattoos or marks, and female genital mutilation are made punishable offences under the Act; and so also is the exposure to pornographic materials,

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trafficking of children, their use of narcotic drugs, or the use of children in any criminal activities, abduction and unlawful removal or transfer from lawful custody, and employment of children as domestic helps outside their own home or family environment.

- Child abduction and forced exploitative labour (which is not of a light nature) or in an industrial undertaking are also stated to be offences. The exceptions to these provisions are where the child is employed by a family member, in work that is of an agricultural or horticultural or domestic in nature, and if such a child is not required to carry or move anything heavy that is likely to adversely affect its moral, mental, physical spiritual or social development.
- Buying, selling, hiring or otherwise dealing in children for purpose of begging, hawking, prostitution or for unlawful immoral purposes are made punishable by long terms of imprisonment. Other offences considered grave include sexual abuse, general exploitation which is prejudicial to the welfare of the child, recruitment into the armed forces and the importation /exposure of children to harmful publications. It further preserves the continued application of all criminal law provisions securing the protection of the child whether born or unborn [23].

2.1.7.3 Children's Responsibilities

Children under the Act, are also given responsibilities which include working towards the cohesion of their families, respecting their parents and elders, placing their physical and intellectual capabilities at the service of the State, contributing to the moral well being of the society, strengthening social and national solidarity, preserving the independence and

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integrity of the country, respecting the ideals of freedom, equality, humaneness, and justice for all persons, relating with others in the spirit of tolerance, dialogue and consultation, and contributing to the best of their abilities solidarity with and unity with Africa, and the world at large. To these ends, the Act mandates parents, guardians, institutions and authorities in whose care children are placed, to provide the necessary guidance, education and training to enable the children live up to these responsibilities[24].

2.1.7.4 Child Justice

The Act, makes provisions for the establishment of "Family Courts". The courts which will operate at the High Court and Magistrate Court levels have been vested with the jurisdiction to hear all cases in which the existence of a legal right, power, duty, liability, privilege, interest, obligation or claim in respect of a child is in issue, and any criminal proceeding, relating thereto. The Act has provided for Child Justice Administration, to replace the Juvenile Justice Administration, which has been in existence for several decades in Nigeria.

The provisions prohibit the subjection of any child to the criminal justice process, and guarantees that due process be given to any child subjected to the child justice system, at all the stages of investigation, adjudication and disposition of any case against such a child. It has prohibited the use of capital punishment, use of imprisonment and use of corporal punishment for children under 18 years, and further provides for the use of scientific tests in deciding paternity cases. These are all novel provisions, as no such prohibition existed under the previous legislations guiding children matters (Children and Young Persons Act -CYPA) [25].

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The Act frowns at institutionalization for pregnant children/teenagers and expectant mothers. But where institutionalization is desirable or unavoidable, it mandates the establishment of Special Mothers Centres for pregnant mothers/teenagers, while Children Residential Centres and Children Correctional Centres are to be established to replace the present Approved Schools created under the CYPA. Where the court decides against institutionalization, it should utilize such disposition measures as dismissing the charge, placing the child under care, guidance and supervision, which is now a replacement for probation and probation officers[26].

2.1.7.5 Children Living under Difficult Circumstances

Much along the principle of creation of institutions for servicing the needs and welfare of children living under difficult circumstances like orphans, street children and those physically challenged are provisions for the establishment, registration, regulation and monitoring of Community/Children's Homes. It provided for the supervisory functions and responsibilities of the Minister having responsibility for children in relation to the various Children's homes, which includes monitoring, provision of financial support, research and returns of information on activities of these homes[27].

2.1.7.6 Child Rights Implementation Committees

The Act provides for the establishment of the Child Rights Implementation Committees at the National, State and Local Government levels. These are to ensure that there is governmental commitment at all levels to fulfilling the implementation of the provisions of the Act, through research, investigation and jurisprudence[28].

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2.1.7.7 Domestication at State Level

The provisions of the Act supersede all other legislations that have a bearing on the rights of the child. Having been enacted at the National level, the States are expected to formally adopt and adapt the Act for domestication as State laws. This is because issues of child rights protection are on the residual list of the Nigerian Constitution, giving states exclusive responsibility and jurisdiction to make laws relevant to their specific situations. State laws inimical to the rights of the child are also to be amended or annulled as may be required, to conform to the Act and the CRC [29.]

2.1.8 UNICEF's Contribution to the Lives of Children (2018-2023)

For the past five years, the work of UNICEF to fulfil the rights of children in Nigeria was guided by the 2018-2023 country programme document signed with the Government of Federal Republic of Nigeria and derived from the UN Sustainable Development Partnership Framework, and the Humanitarian Response Plan for Nigeria. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus has been on post-COVID recovery, consolidating programming, harnessing private sector partnerships and applying lessons and innovations from the pandemic response. This was all carried out with a longer-term vision towards 2030. To accelerate SDG achievement, the United Nations agencies partnered as "One UN" to provide joint strategies for common results and robust support to the Federal Government of Nigeria. Together we build on each other's efforts under the global Spotlight Initiative to prevent abuse and strengthen response systems for children and women[30].

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Nigeria faces challenges in quality service delivery and human resource capacity across sectors, against a backdrop of environmental shocks, violence, and the protracted conflict in the north-east and growing hostilities in the north-west. This operating environment of shifting emergency and development contexts requires a flexible approach. Fulfilling its dual mandate to uphold children's rights in both humanitarian and development contexts, UNICEF Nigeria assumed a flexible and responsive approach to ensure consistent delivery of results for children. Based on the forgoing, UNICEF as made a heavy contribution to achieve positive change for children in Nigeria[30].

2.1.9 History of Educational Access in Nigeria

Researchers have contended that Nigeria has one of the poorest accesses to education in the world[44]. It is difficult to counter this assertion as the history of education in Nigeria tells a story of perpetual limited access. Formal, or Western-styled education, was introduced different regions in Nigeria before the country even became a country. The colonialist brought education, along with their missionary works and while each mission was committed to educating the 'earthen' none has the capacity to introduce mass education or encourage mass enrolment. In the early days of education in Nigeria, each only did what it can to educate a few members of the community in which they operated[45]. Later, each mission was able to build some form of system and curriculum ensuring that

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all of their schools in Nigeria operate similar curriculum and maintained the same standard. Some of the enduring missionary schools are still existing today.

It was in 1842 that Rev. Thomas Freeman and the couple De Graft of the Wesleyan Methodist first arrived in Nigeria to establish a mission and a school. The mission established a school meant only for in Lagos in 1878[46]. It took seventeen years before a girls' school was established in 1895. This meant that a generation of girls had watched they male age-mates attending and graduating from schools while they were made to help their mothers, get married, to some of the educated boys and start raising kids. This trend was noticeable among other mission schools.

Towards the end of 1949, the Church Missionary Society, which had already established its first school in Abeokuta in 1846 also established four schools in Badagry, Lagos, Abeokuta, and Ibadan. The mission established its first grammar school in Lagos in 1859 and its first girl's school in Eastern Nigeria at Ogbunike in the Onitsha district in 1895. Like the methodist school, girls from town where the CMS had established boys only schools had to wait for many years before they were allowed in schools. In essence, the patriarchal society, seeing that education opportunities were limited, excluded girls in favour of boys[47]. However, Southern Nigeria, unlike the North, was not strongly against female education. Therefore, when four French Catholic Sisters arrived Lagos in 1872 to start a school for women, they met with virtually no resistance.

The different Christian missions used school as an organ of religious instruction, the development of character, the acquisition of skills, and the introduction to the three fundamental components of reading, writing, and arithmetic. One of the most enduring

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outcomes was the development of a crop of educated Nigerians who were later to play a role in securing independence and running the independent Nigeria. Scholars observed that, recognising the opportunities offered for paid employment from the church, the colonial government, or one of the trading companies, many people did all they could to attend schools. This secured easy access to the new money economy that the colonial authorities had introduced.

Traditional leaders, especially from the Eastern region also discovered it as a means to acquire knowledge about the methods of the foreigners in order to be more effective in their efforts to combat the savagery of the colonial government in their society. In numerous cases, the indigenous peoples united to cover the school tuition of a select number of children from their villages in order to ensure that the European way of life was absorbed. Additionally, the churches exerted considerable effort to establish as many schools as their resources permitted, as the acceptance of Western formal education invariably resulted in the child's conversion[48].

As the few educated young men began to be employed by both the church and the government as court clerks, police officers, messengers, interpreters, catechists, or teachers, there was an abrupt increase in the number of pupils enrolled. Western education became the most straightforward method for individuals to obtain more lucrative and prestigious white-collar positions. The interesting fact was that, in places such as Igboland, only servants and orphans were sent to school as the elite considered them as guinea pigs, suitable for an experiment. In due time, he freeborn children also observed that they were progressively being surpassed by those they perceived as invalids in the traditional society. Consequently, a significant number of males attended school in order to contend with their

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peers. Nevertheless, the number of females who were initially educated continued to decline, as they were not as gainfully employed as boys. None of the faiths paid sufficient attention to this trend as it began to emerge. Rather, additional resources were mobilized to establish additional institutions for males in order to accommodate their increasing population[49]. However, the focus was on male students.

As time progressed, the discrepancy in the number of educational institutions for each gender remained pronounced. An examination of the numbers will elucidate the matter more clearly. The Catholic Church, esteemed as a proponent of education, established its inaugural primary school in 1888, three years following its introduction to Igbo culture. This institution was coeducational. The subsequent year, it instituted one for girls and another for boys. By 1894-1895, the number of mixed primary schools increased to three, boys' schools to two, while girls' schools saw no growth[50]. By 1900, the disparity was evident, with the population of male students in Catholic Church institutions in the Central Province of the Southern Protectorate reaching 1,550. The girls were just eleven[51].

According to reports, by 1903, thirteen Catholic elementary schools for boys and one seminary were already established in eastern Nigeria. As of 1918, no more girls' school had been established[52]. With the exception of basic schools, all four first post-primary institutions established by the Catholic Church between 1924 and 1935 were exclusively for males. The missionaries focused their efforts on establishing pre-marriage training centres for females, where they were instructed on being exemplary Christian housewives and mothers[53]. This contrasted sharply with existing traditional culture in many Nigerian tribes, when both genders received informal education to assume responsibilities in either private or public spheres. Women acquired skills in domestic management, trade,

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agriculture, and assumed public responsibilities as heads of women's groups and religious officials. Nevertheless, the recently implemented Western educational system delineated certain boundaries.

While males acquired skills for public engagement, women's education focused predominantly on domestic management. Furthermore, they were led to comprehend that this was the exclusive ideal to which each rational woman ought to strive. It soon became unusual for a household to have an educated lady and an uneducated husband. As education conferred access to the emerging economic and political power of the new order, and given that the system favoured males over women, men's dominance over women significantly intensified. In pre-independence Nigeria, it took the efforts of affluent parents, who anticipated the advantages these possibilities may provide for their daughters in the evolving political and socio-economic landscape, before the dream of having post-primary schools exclusively for females became a reality. This only happened after many years of boys only secondary schools[52].

Experts have noted that the enrolment of boys in Catholic schools prior to 1922 significantly exceeded that of girls, a phenomenon partially ascribed to the prevailing negative attitudes towards women's education and the reluctance of parents towards coeducational institutions, which were more prevalent[54]. It has also been argued that foreign missionaries in Nigeria had a role to play in fostering a negative perception of girls' education. If the parents' adverse perspective on co-education was indeed a concern, as suggested by some commentators, it is reasonable to anticipate that the initial missionaries, who focused on founding more boys' schools, would have similarly allocated their resources to establish additional girls' schools to offer parents an alternative or educate

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reluctant parents about measures to keep girls safe in mixed schools[55]. However, this was not accomplished by the missionaries.

It was not until the late 1920s that indigenous female educators commenced teaching in Catholic schools throughout eastern Nigeria; by 1929, there were 1,927 indigenous male teachers, while the number of indigenous female teachers was merely twenty[56]. This has been blamed on the lopsided access to education among the genders. Scholars asserts that the lack of separate schools for girls hindered their enrolment, noting that once separate schools received adequate consideration, "the attitude towards their education changed fairly rapidly." He stated that following this transformation, other villages requested the missionaries to establish a presence among them. He asserts, "If the populace of Eastern Nigeria is passionate about education, they are even more so regarding the education of women[57]."

Many communities across Nigeria made efforts to establish schools especially for girls. Regrettably, this fervour was not maintained. The initiative was destined for abandonment due to the curriculum's characteristics, its objectives, and the absence of profitable work opportunities for girls post-education[57]. Experts argued that "the colonial administration's reluctance to employ women in numerous establishments until nearly a century after its inception undoubtedly disheartened aspiring Nigerian women[58]." The sole pragmatic advantage that encouraged girls to remain in school and motivated their parents, both Christian and non-Christian, to persist in their support, was the enhanced likelihood of educated girls marrying into the burgeoning elite class of educated males, who, at that time, were experiencing superior financial prosperity and stability compared to their contemporaries[59].

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An earlier analysis of C.M.S. schools reveal the inequality in the curriculum provided to boys' and girls' schools at that period. It was observed that when the Anglicans ultimately agreed to incorporate subjects, they deemed secular into their curriculum, young males were instructed in Bible studies, geography, mathematics, English language, physiology, hygiene, and basic medical care. Concurrently, females exclusively engaged in Bible studies in their training centres, along with classes in domestic management, such as embroidery, knitting, homemaking, and childcare[60]. They were instructed in the local language to facilitate their reading of the Bible in the vernacular.

Prior to the 1920s, the C.M.S. did not employ the English language to instruct any female unless she was specifically designated for training as a student teacher. Consequently, although young Anglican males were educated for successful employment, young Anglican females were primarily instructed to serve as supportive companions to men and to fulfil the role of responsible mothers, nurturing their children in the Anglican faith. Moreover, although Anglican boys' schools had financial support and scholarships from Anglican Churches in England, girls' schools did not get same consideration. The students mostly relied on the self-sustaining efforts of their parents and relatives.

The challenge in access to education was not limited to Southern Nigeria. People in the Northern part of Nigeria also lacked access to education. Furthermore, there were some paradoxes. While people in Eastern Nigeria sent serfs and orphans to schools, Northerners only sent the children of the elite. Nevertheless, access to education was also an issue in the North with all girls virtually excluded from education.

The restricted aims of the early proponents of Western education in Nigeria, educational advancement in the region, as was the case across the nation, prior to 1950 was severely

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insufficient to fulfil the requirements of a modern state. Neither the Christian Missions nor the colonial authority in Western Nigeria, and indeed throughout Nigeria, adequately addressed the widespread aspirations for mass education. Indeed, enrolment rate in the north was very low compared to the south. Indeed, the imbalance in access to education across the regions of Nigeria was palpable before and after independence as admirative, technical, and professional sectors of the young country were dominated by Southerners to the detriment of Northerners which made the Northerners to be wary of independence[61]. The western region of Nigeria did not wait for the rest of the nation before pursuing its own educational policy.

Pre independent Nigeria saw the emergence of three region with each the regions have powers over certain services such as education. The western region of Nigeria led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo blazed the trail when it introduced free primary education for all children in the region[62]. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, approved by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948, articulated several affirmations regarding the inherent rights of all individuals. The Declaration ensures individuals a comprehensive array of fundamental freedoms, including "the freedom of parents to select the type of education provided to their children." Of more significance, particularly in relation to this article, is Article 26, Sub-Section 11 of the Declaration, which asserts the rights to which every individual is entitled.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Social Reproduction Theory

Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) examines how societal structures, especially related

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to class and inequality, are maintained and perpetuated over time through various mechanisms, including family, education, culture, and labour systems. Originating from Marxist thought, SRT highlights how the capitalist system relies on both the production of goods and services and the reproduction of the labour force and social hierarchies that sustain economic inequality[63]. In essence, SRT focuses on how social inequalities—particularly those of class, gender, and race—are passed down from one generation to the next, ensuring that the dominant class retains its privileges while subordinate classes remain disadvantaged. It explores how certain institutions, such as the family, schools, and the state, play key roles in this process of social reproduction.

Social reproduction involves the daily, generational, and historical processes that reproduce the labour force needed for capitalism to survive. This includes biological reproduction (having children) and the care and education required to prepare future workers for the labour market. Feminist theorists, such as Silvia Federici and Nancy Fraser, have emphasized the role of unpaid domestic labour—mainly carried out by women—in reproducing workers for capitalism. This unpaid labour, which includes child-rearing, caregiving, and household maintenance, is essential for sustaining the workforce but is often undervalued or ignored in economic analyses.

According to theorists like Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, schools play a crucial role in the reproduction of social hierarchies by transmitting cultural capital (knowledge, skills, behaviours associated with higher classes) and legitimizing social inequalities. Through the education system, children of wealthy families are often provided with the resources, networks, and cultural knowledge needed to succeed, while those from lower-income backgrounds may face systemic barriers, leading to the

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perpetuation of class divisions[64].

In the context of out-of-school children, Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) offers a valuable lens to understand how social and economic inequalities are perpetuated through generations, especially as they relate to access to education. Out-of-school children, particularly in low-income and marginalized communities, often reflect the structural barriers that prevent equitable access to education, reinforcing cycles of poverty and exclusion[40].

2.2.1.1 Key Aspects of Social Reproduction Theory Related to Out-of-School Children

Economic Inequality and Education Access: One of the primary tenets of SRT is the idea that economic structures reproduce class divisions. For many families, the economic realities of poverty force children out of school. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds may have to work to support their families, forego school due to inability to pay fees, or face additional costs like uniforms and transportation. This lack of access to education ensures that the children of poor families remain trapped in poverty, while wealthier families can afford the resources that lead to educational success, further widening the gap[38].

The Role of Family in Social Reproduction: According to SRT, the family plays a critical role in the reproduction of social class and inequalities. In many cases, out-of-school children come from families where parents or guardians themselves may not have had access to education or did not complete their schooling. These parents may lack the knowledge, resources, or social capital necessary to support their children's education, contributing to an intergenerational cycle of limited educational attainment. For instance,

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families struggling with economic hardships or those marginalized based on race, ethnicity, or gender may prioritize immediate survival over education, leading to higher rates of school dropout among their children[39].

Cultural and Symbolic Capital: SRT emphasizes how educational institutions, like schools, often reflect and reinforce the values of the dominant class. Children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, or those from marginalized groups, may lack the cultural capital (knowledge, language, behaviours) needed to succeed in the formal education system. In communities where education is undervalued due to historical or cultural reasons, children may face additional challenges that lead to them dropping out or never enrolling in school. In these cases, the lack of alignment between a child's home culture and the school's expectations contribute to exclusion from the educational process, whether through disengagement, absenteeism, or outright dropout[39].

Gender Inequality and Social Reproduction: Gender is another important dimension in the discussion of out-of-school children, particularly in patriarchal societies where girls' education is undervalued. In many regions, girls are disproportionately affected by social reproduction processes that prioritize domestic labour, early marriage, and caregiving over formal education. This reinforces gender norms and ensures that the cycle of limited educational attainment for women continues, further contributing to broader gender inequalities in society[32].

Institutional Barriers and Educational Access: Schools and educational systems themselves can act as mechanisms of social reproduction, often catering to the needs of middle- and upper-class families while marginalizing those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The lack of adequate public schooling, quality education, and accessible

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infrastructure in rural or low-income areas perpetuates the exclusion of these children from education. For out-of-school children, inadequate school facilities, poorly trained teachers, and limited resources make attending and succeeding in school more difficult, further compounding social and educational inequalities[28].

Social Policies and Out-of-School Children: Social reproduction theory suggests that state policies play a critical role in either breaking or reinforcing cycles of inequality. Where education policies are lacking—such as inadequate funding for public schools, insufficient teacher training, and weak child protection policies—out-of-school rates tend to be higher. Without strong governmental intervention to ensure compulsory and free education for all children, marginalized groups remain excluded from the education system, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and inequality[65].

2.2.2 Structural Functionalism

Structural Functionalism, a sociological theory developed by thinkers such as Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons, views society as a system composed of interconnected parts that work together to maintain stability and equilibrium. Each part, or social institution—such as the family, education, government, and economy—has a specific function that contributes to the overall functioning of society. When one part of the system fails, it affects the stability of the whole[66]. The theory suggests that failures within societal institutions—such as economic hardship, weak educational infrastructure, or cultural attitudes—prevent children from attending school, thus destabilizing societal equilibrium.

In the context of insecurity and out-of-school children, structural functionalism can provide insights into how societal structures either support or disrupt children's access to

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education, and how the resulting increase in out-of-school children can destabilize broader societal functions. Insecurity—whether caused by conflict, violence, or social unrest—directly disrupts the function of several key societal institutions, particularly those responsible for the well-being and education of children. For instance, communities facing insecurity often see a breakdown in both family stability and local governance, leading to challenges in maintaining law, order, and basic social services like education.

In a functional society, the family plays a crucial role in nurturing children and ensuring their development, including sending them to school. In regions affected by insecurity, however, families may be displaced or fractured, reducing their capacity to prioritize or support their children's education. When families cannot fulfil this role, children are more likely to drop out of school, contributing to the rise in out-of-school children.

The education system is one of the key institutions that ensures children acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for societal integration and future employment. In contexts of insecurity, schools are often targets of violence or may be closed due to instability, rendering them non-functional. When schools fail to operate, their role in socializing children and preparing them for their societal roles is undermined, leading to an increase in out-of-school children[17].

In a functional society, the government is responsible for maintaining security and ensuring that basic services, including education, are available. However, in areas experiencing insecurity, governments often struggle to provide protection, and resources for schools and other social services may be diverted to security efforts. The failure of government institutions to protect communities and provide stable educational environments can force children out of school, exacerbating the problem of educational

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exclusion[18].

Structural functionalism also highlights how the increase in out-of-school children can further destabilize society. Education is not just a personal benefit but also a societal function that prepares individuals to contribute to social stability through various roles, including economic productivity, civic engagement, and social integration. When children are not in school, they miss out on crucial socialization processes that equip them with the values, norms, and skills needed to function as productive members of society. Over time, this can lead to higher rates of delinquency, crime, and social disorder, particularly in regions where young people, deprived of education and future opportunities, become more vulnerable to recruitment by gangs or extremist groups[24].

A functional education system produces human capital necessary for economic growth. When insecurity leads to a rise in out-of-school children, it weakens the country's future workforce, which in turn hampers economic development. Without education, these children are less likely to acquire the skills needed to secure stable jobs, perpetuating cycles of poverty and dependency. Structural functionalism suggests that when one part of society is dysfunctional, it has ripple effects throughout the whole. The presence of large numbers of out-of-school children, particularly in insecure regions, deepens social inequality. As those who are able to access education continue to progress, out-of-school children are left behind, widening the social and economic gaps between regions and within communities[11].

In conclusion, from the perspective of structural functionalism, insecurity contributes to a breakdown in several key institutions, including the family, education, and government. These disruptions lead to an increase in out-of-school children, which further threatens

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societal equilibrium by reducing social cohesion, increasing inequality, and limiting economic growth. Addressing the issue of out-of-school children in insecure regions requires restoring the functionality of these institutions—ensuring family stability, re-establishing schools, and improving government capacity to provide education despite challenging circumstances.

2.3 Review of Empirical Studies

2.3.1 Prevalence of Out of School Children in Nigeria

Education is recognized as a fundamental human right essential for the development of every child. This right is enshrined in various international treaties and declarations, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which collectively affirm that all children should have access to quality education without discrimination[67]. In Nigeria, a child is any individual below the age of eighteen years. In line with this, the government has made basic education which is minimum of Primary and Junior Secondary education, free and compulsory for all Nigerian child[68]. Apart from providing free basic education, various government programmes have also been implemented to encourage school enrolment.

The government of Nigeria, like many countries, has spent a lot of money, made a lot of legislative measures, and built a lot of social apparatuses to improve its educational system throughout the years. An example of this is the flagship Universal Primary Education forum, which Chief Obafemi Awolowo, first premier of the now-defunct Western Region of Nigeria, proposed and launched in the 1950s to improve early childhood education in the region[49]. The goal of this ambitious initiative was to eradicate

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illiteracy and trained the manpower needed for development. This would lead to a domino effect of various educational programs funded by the government.

In an effort to formulate what was envisioned as "A Philosophy for Nigerian Education," the National Policy on Education (NPE) was a product of the September 1969 National Curriculum Conference, which was organized by the Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council. Following this, the NPE established Universal Basic Education (UBE) on the basis of the Free Universal Basic Education Act, which mandated that all children in Nigeria attend elementary school for free and was later made mandatory[49].

The constitutional right to free and compulsory elementary and junior secondary education for all eligible Nigerian citizens became enforceable in Nigeria under the provisions of section 2(1) of the Compulsory Free Universal Basic Education Act of 2004 and section 18(3)(a) of the Constitution. The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), an intervention agency established by the Federal government, was in charge of the operational aspects of the UBE program, which was launched in 1999 to ensure that primary education was of high quality throughout Nigeria[69].

One of the recent government initiatives to entice children to attend school is the Nigeria's National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP). This is a government initiative aimed at addressing malnutrition and improving educational outcomes for primary school children. Launched in 2016, the program provides free daily meals to pupils in public primary schools, sourcing food from local smallholder farmers. This initiative not only enhances child nutrition but also supports local agriculture and creates jobs, particularly for women who prepare and deliver the meals[70]. Despite this and other incentives, millions of Nigerian children are still out of school.

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Any child who is not attending classes or enrolled in any form of formal education is considered as out of school. It was estimated that about 98 million children across sub–Saharan Africa are illiterate, innumerate, and do not attend schools[71]. Empirical evidence abounds to show that one third of all the children who are not in school are from African countries such as Nigeria[72]. According to reports from multilateral agencies such as UNESCO, for every ten children under five years of age in Nigeria, six are from homes considered as multidimensionally poor meaning that education is very low on the priorities of their parents[73].

Nigeria has the biggest number of out-of-school children globally, even though the nation has a solid legal and administrative framework, distributes grants, loans, and has educational plans. With an estimated 10.2 million still not in school in 2022, the country's Basic Education Statistics put the number of out-of-school children between the ages of 6 and 11 at 10 million[74]. Twenty million more children are considered to be out of school if secondary school-aged children are included[75]. Another issue embedded in the issue of out-of-school children is the noticeable gender gap in elementary and secondary education enrolment, with a 20% disparity in enrolment and retention rates between male and female students.

As mentioned earlier, the issue of out-of-school children is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. Several governments in other sub-Saharan African nations are also facing this challenge, which has led them to undertake significant initiatives to enhance school enrolment. Researchers and policymakers have analysed out-of-school children (OOSC) developments in Nigeria in relation to what is happening in other countries such as Tanzania, Ghana, South Africa, and Kenya[76],[77],[78]. Several of this comparative perspective

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has open a regional and individual perspective of the phenomenon highlighting shared challenges, successful policies, and innovative strategies that have either impeded or promoted educational inclusiveness.

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) forecasts that from 1999 to 2021, Ghana was able to reduce the number of out-of-school children (OOSC) among primary school-aged children (ages 1–13), with the number of OOSC declining from 1,369,514 to 547,863 within a 20-year span. Ghanaian scholars have attributed the extent of progress made to extensive educational reforms initiated by a pragmatic policy agenda from the Ghanaian government during the last twenty years[79]. Some of the initiatives introduced by Ghana include Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) and capital grants, together with enhancements in infrastructure and teacher training programs, significantly reduced out-of-school children's rates[80].

Another country with a history of out-of-school children is South Africa. The country used to have a high rate of out-of-school children. However, it was able to achieve a significant reduction in out-of-school children of primary school age during the same period—from 1,675,100 to 568,104[81]. Similar to the strategy adopted by Ghana, South Africa's main approach to decrease the number of primary-aged children not attending school was to implement selective free basic education. Inaugurated in 2007, this program classified several schools in economically disadvantaged regions as no-fee institutions, therefore eliminating a substantial financial obstacle to education for many families[82]. The 'no-fee school' policy was integral to a comprehensive plan aimed at attaining universal primary education and rectifying educational disparities originating from the apartheid period[83]. This initiative dramatically enhanced school enrolment and attendance

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rates by guaranteeing free basic education for the most impoverished sections of society. In East Africa, Rwanda serves as a good example of how to tackle out-of-school children conundrum. Though small in size and in term of economic power, the country has made giant strides, demonstrating considerable success in tackling the out-of-school children issue since the beginning of the millennium. The data indicates that the population of out-of-school primary-aged children decreased from 495,594 in 2000 to 174,116 in 2021[81]. Experts have observed that the strategic execution of Rwanda's Nine-Year Basic Education programme has garnered widespread acclaim for its efficacy in diminishing out-of-school children's rates in the nation[84,85].

Nigeria's circumstances starkly differ from those of the previously named countries. Nigeria has some similarities with these countries because it has a large number of out of school children and it has also explored financial incentives and free education to solve the problem. Indeed, Nigeria instituted universal free basic education up to junior secondary school level as opposed to South Africa which only provided tuition-free schools in selected parts of the country. However, Nigeria could not be said to have achieved the same level of success as South Africa when it comes to reducing the rate of out-of-school children. Between the years 2000 and 2022, Nigeria had a remarkable 36.5% rise in the population of out-of-school children[81]. The statistical trend indicates an increase from 6,467,778 in 2000 to almost 10.2 million in 2022. Notwithstanding numerous interventions, including the UBE programme, state initiatives to educate Nigeria's nomadic population (Almajiri) and efforts to incorporate Quranic schools into the formal education system, Nigeria continues to witness a sustained increase in the rate of out-of-school children[86,87].

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Despite indications of a significant decline in worldwide out-of-school rates due to substantial efforts by governmental and non-governmental organizations, this progress has been hindered by many sociopolitical issues, particularly in Nigeria. This part presents a review of the available literature on the issue, followed by a description of the methodologies employed in this study. The report utilises empirical data from current literature to expound on three major lessons and suggestions aimed at achieving excellent and inclusive education for all in Nigeria.

Today, all available indices provide a sobering picture of out-of-school children in Nigeria. For context, a report showed that 30% of school-age children in rural areas of Nigerian are not in school, while 18% of children in urban areas are not enrolled in school at all. This indicates that, while the issue of out-of-school children is prevalent in the rural areas of Nigeria, the urban centres are not left out of the problem.

The number of out-of-school children have remained stubbornly high across the last decades. One worrisome index is the rate of primary school out of school children. Around 2016, it was estimated that 27.2% of primary school age in Nigeria were out of school. Despite various intervention, out-of-school primary school age children in Nigeria stood at 25.6% in 2021. This figure is expected to be higher among secondary school age children. Furthermore, there is a disparity across Nigeria when it comes to out-of-school children. Northern Nigeria is particularly hit hard by the out-of-school enrolment problem; enrolment in elementary schools in the north is 15% lower than in the south)[49]. Existing evidence indicates a favourable association between human development and the

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accessibility of formal elementary education[88],[89].

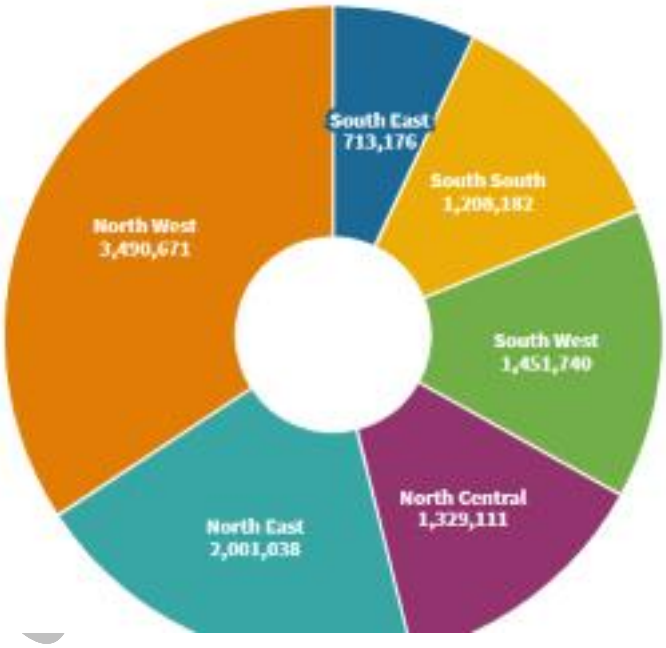
As to the latest records, Africa is recognised for possessing the youngest population globally, with a median age of 18.7 years[90]. The United Nations study on global population forecasts anticipated that by mid-century, Africa will host over one billion children. Scholars assert that the continent is pivotal in tackling the global education issue, especially with out-of-school children, due to the significant rise in the youth population[91]. Over the past two decades, there has been a significant decline in the global population of out-of-school children, decreasing from 400 million in 2000 to 244 million in 2021[81].

In its evaluation of the African context in 2022, the Global Education Monitoring Report indicated that with 98 million children out of school, the continent experiences the minimal reduction in the rates of out-of-school children. To address this issue, experts advocate for a comparative analysis of the fundamental tendencies across several African nations, while suggesting data-driven and localized solutions for implementation. The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) Report conducted a comparative analysis across African nations, revealing that most African Commonwealth countries have elevated gross enrolment rates (GER) at the primary level, according to data collected from UIS. This report's data indicates a troubling situation in sub-Saharan Africa for out-of-school children aged 6 to 10. Kenya has 1.8 million out-of-school children (OOSC), the Democratic Republic of Congo has 5.9 million, and Ethiopia has an even greater total of 10.5 million.

Nevertheless, Nigeria, although not possessing the largest percentage of out-of-school

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children (OOSC) in relation to its overall population, has a concerning 20.2 million out-of-school children. This highlights the need for a comprehensive examination of the policy-related variables that lead to elevated rates of out-of-school children in sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria's circumstances merit specific consideration within this wider framework. Although Nigeria does not possess the greatest percentage rate of out-of-school children, its total of 20.2 million OOSC underscores an urgent necessity for thorough investigation. Comprehending the Nigerian context might uncover significant obstacles to education that endure despite continuous efforts. Confronting these difficulties is essential, since Nigeria's educational shortcomings have significant repercussions for regional stability and prosperity[92].



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Fig 2.1: Statistics on Out-of-School Children in Nigeria

Source:[93]

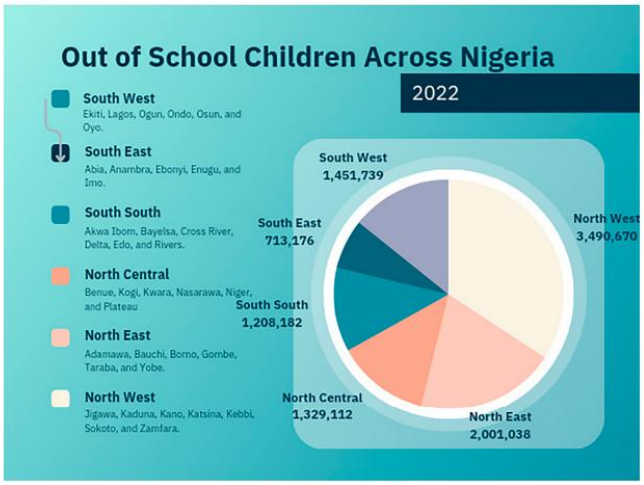


Fig 2.2: Out-of-School Children Across Nigeria

Source:[93]

Geopolitical zones	Incidents frequency	Incidents description	Location of incidence
North-Eastearn Nigeria	5	Killing, abduction and destruction of schools	School premises
North-Western Nigeria	49	Killing and destruction of schools	School premises
North-Central Nigeria	11	Killing and abduction	School premises/roadway to or from school
South-Southern Nigeria	3	Killing and abduction	Roadway to or from school
South-Western Nigeria	2	Abduction	School Premises/roadway to or from school
South-Eastern Nigeria	1	Assault	School premises
Total	71		

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Table 2.1: The Size of Out-of-School Children in Nigeria
Source:[94]

2.3.2 Impact of Insecurity on the Out-Of-School Children Rate in Nigeria

The evidence from literature indicates that sociocultural norms, economic impediments, and conflict must be recognized as determinants of regional educational disparity and predictors of out-of-school children. The current data provides a comprehensive overview of the size of out-of-school children in Nigeria and elucidates the varying factors that contribute to the prevalence of OOSC throughout the country's numerous regions. As can be seen from Figure 2.1, there is a disproportionate distribution of out-of-school children's populations across several states in northern Nigeria. The Digest of Basic Education Statistics reveals that the out-of-school children rate for 6–11-year-olds is much higher in the northern geopolitical zones of Nigeria than in the southern regions. Figure 2.2 illustrates 3,490,670 out-of-school children in the North-West and 2,001,038 in the North-East areas. Yobe, at 43.44%, has the largest percentage of out-of-school children among northern states, followed by Taraba at 41.52%, Zamfara at 41.13%, and Sokoto at 37.31%. Lagos (10.20%), Anambra (15.28%), and Ekiti (16.98%) in the south have the lowest percentages of out-of-school children[93,94].

A primary factor contributing to the persistent increase of out-of-school children (OOSC) in northern Nigeria is the significant disruption of livelihoods caused by war instigated by terrorists and robbers. In recent years, instability in the Central Sahel has proliferated to adjacent coastal nations. Since 2021, non-state armed organizations have infiltrated

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Burkina Faso's southern borders, impacting nations such as Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Ghana, and Togo. This has resulted in population relocation and school closures, underscoring the necessity for prevention and preparedness to ensure access to excellent education[95]. The conditions resemble those in Nigeria. For more than ten years, terrorist organizations like Boko Haram and bandits have created many strongholds inside the woods of northern Nigeria, exploiting the area's physical features and population density. The very violent factions in northern Nigeria have resulted in the abduction of schoolgirls, the relocation of millions of Nigerians, and the destruction of several educational[96,97]. Qualitative study conducted by UNICEF indicates that trauma resulting from these attacks may create a lasting psychological impact that dissuades children from pursuing Western education thereafter[98].

The majority of youngsters fortunate enough to escape these brutal assaults ultimately find themselves in internally displaced persons camps. They experience significant neglect, endure prejudice and social conflicts, and remain unexposed to formal education[99]. While SDG 4 pertains to internally displaced persons, the evidence indicates that the management of educational requirements in IDP camps is insufficient for sustainable development.

Another scholar elucidated that, similar to the situation in northern Nigeria, violent extremism has profoundly impacted millions of youngsters in low- and middle-income nations, subjecting them to armed conflict, terrorism, and many manifestations of communal violence[100]. The infamous kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls in Chibok in 2014 exemplifies the profound disruption terrorism inflicts on educational systems[101]. The inception of the Boko Haram insurgency in 2009 profoundly affected education in

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Nigeria, marked by the group's anti-Western education philosophy and violent assaults on schools, resulting in pervasive terror and the shutdown of educational institutions. Various research has examined the experiences of survivors and witnesses, illuminating the profound effects on youth enduring perpetual threat[102,103]. The violence directed against schools adversely affects physical, economic, and psychological well-being and may also dissuade children's future inclination to attend school. Table 3 presents the occurrences of violence across Nigeria's geographical zones, resulting in the abduction of over 1,683 children, the fatalities of 186 students and 16 teachers/workers, 88 injuries, and the destruction of 25 school structures, as of the time of this article's composition[104].

From 2010 to May 2023, there have been more than 71 occurrences associated with terrorist attacks on schools in Nigeria, resulting in fatalities, injuries, and extensive infrastructure damage. This includes violence directed toward educational institutions, educators, and pupils. The discourse on the influence of terrorism on educational access is predominantly seen in media stories observed a significant lack of empirical research within the Nigerian academic sphere that has aimed to offer a scholarly examination of the relationship between Boko Haram and bandit assaults in Northern Nigeria and the out-of-school children (OOSC) rate in the country. This persists in obstructing a thorough comprehension of this issue[103].

The influence of conflict on education is a significant issue, especially in areas severely impacted by persistent violence. The research evaluates the microeconomic impact of the Boko Haram war on children's education in North-East Nigeria from 2009 to 2016. The study used an individual panel fixed-effects regression to demonstrate that exposure to conflict within homes results in reduced school enrolment and increased dropout rates.

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Furthermore, a difference-in-difference analysis indicates that the conflict diminishes the average years of schooling attained. The research indicates that the rise in child labour within home firms, prompted by declining school quality owing to the conflict, significantly influences the choice to abandon education. Furthermore, the dispute adversely affects kids' general health.

Another study examines the detrimental effects of the Boko Haram insurgency on educational progress in Nigeria's North-Eastern states, specifically Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe, utilizing the anomie theory to assess Boko Haram's influence on education in northern Nigeria. This study employed a descriptive survey methodology and purposive sampling to collect data from 240 participants, yielding 200 valid questionnaires. Both primary data (derived from these surveys) and secondary data were analysed. Results, displayed in tables and analysed using a 4-point Likert scale with a criteria mean of 2.50, indicate that Boko Haram's actions significantly hinder educational advancement.

The difficulties of delivering excellent basic education to internally displaced children in Nigeria's North-Central and North-East areas, emphasised the experiences of the victims of these attacks. The issues arise from extended hostilities resulting in significant displacements, mainly owing to the actions of Boko Haram and Fulani herders. The research utilized qualitative methodologies, comprising interviews, observations, and document analyses in three internally displaced persons camps and adjacent schools, engaging policymakers, camp administrators, educators, and displaced youth. It disclosed substantial discrepancies between policy objectives and actual execution, highlighting challenges such as restricted accessibility, deficient infrastructure, and insufficient educational resources. Despite the children's enthusiasm for school, challenges such as

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teacher shortages, inadequate training, and insufficient governmental commitment impeded advancement.

Studies emphasised that persistent violence and conflicts in the nation have forced families into camps, where they depend on insufficient government-rationed food, exacerbating the issue. This contributes to the elevated number of out-of-school children in Nigeria and highlights the substantial effect of food insecurity, especially calorie shortage, in worsening this problem. The widespread problem of school abductions in Nigeria and underscored the dimension of gender-based terrorism.

Limited research has explored the complex relationship between gender dynamics, gender constructions, and official responses to violence against women and girls, especially regarding the elevated out-of-school children rate among females in Nigeria. This research sought to address this gap by doing an extensive examination of the impact of sociocultural elements in Nigeria on extremist organizations' targeting of women and girls, leading to a substantial percentage of girls being out of school. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating semi-structured interviews with stakeholders and a comprehensive analysis of secondary materials, including academic publications and reports from non-governmental organizations. The findings illuminate how Nigerian social beliefs ascribe particular economic and strategic significance to women and girls, rendering them vulnerable targets for extremist organizations seeking to use abductions for diverse objectives.

The paper investigates the effects of these abductions on the elevated out-of-school children (OOSC) rate among girls and analyses how government reactions are influenced by gender dynamics, educational policies, human rights issues, and larger geopolitical

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variables, including the emergence of extremist ideologies. The study highlights the critical necessity for societal change, gender-sensitive prevention strategies, and comprehensive legislative actions to tackle the interconnected issues of gender-based violence, terrorism, and the elevated out-of-school children rate among girls, thus making a substantial contribution to the current literature on gender-based terrorism and international relations.

Various local and international scholars have paid attention to the issue of out-of-school children in Nigeria and the rest of the world. This is borne on the recognition of the role of education in individual and national development. According to a scholar, national and international instruments recognize education as one of the essential rights[105]. Children in many underdeveloped countries have restricted access to education because of a number of variables, including family preferences and influences, interest, and corruption. A fundamental tool for human development, education is essential for developing well-informed brains. No matter a person's age or socioeconomic standing, education transforms their character and sharpens their intellect. Local, state, and federal governments as well as development partners like the African Union, Economic Community of African States (ECOWAS), United Nations (UN), United Nations Economic, Social, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and United Nations Children's Organization have taken notice of the problem of out-of-school children.

As rightly put by a scholar, education is essential for development and sustainable advancement. Out-of-school children impede development and sustained progress. The study therefore examined out-of-school children, focusing on the boosting causes and implications for sustainable development in the North Central Geo-Political Zone of

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Nigeria. The study employed a survey research design to collect data from selected respondents representing the full population of teachers and parents in the North Central Geo-Political zone of Nigeria. A sample of 800 respondents was obtained from two states using standard random sampling methods. Four research questions and corresponding hypotheses were developed to direct the investigation[3].

The research included both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to analyse the data. Data was collected via a questionnaire entitled 'Out of School Children Questionnaire' (OSCQ). The research issues were addressed with mean and standard deviation scores, while an independent t-test statistic was employed to evaluate the hypotheses at a 0.05 alpha level of significance. The study's findings indicated that poverty, child labour, adolescent pregnancy, and distance to school are the primary factors contributing to children being out of school in the North Central Geo-Political Zone. Furthermore, menial employment was a significant consequence of youngsters being out of school. The study's findings recommend that punitive measures be implemented for parents whose children are not enrolled in school, and that poverty alleviation strategies be integrated into the formulation of relevant policies and intervention measures to assist impoverished individuals in enhancing their living conditions[32].

A scholar examined a plethora of scholarly literature on crises, insecurity, and peacebuilding to provide a solid foundation and reach a reasonable conclusion. Documented cases of induced crises that affected schools also existed. Mission Secondary Schools located in the Nasarawa region of Jos were assaulted by Muslim extremists. Incidents of sexual assault in hostels were similarly disclosed, while numerous school attacks went unreported. Recent statistics indicate that approximately 2,295 teachers were

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killed and 19,000 others displaced in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States from 2009 to 2018, while an estimated 1,500 schools have been destroyed since 2014, resulting in over 1,280 casualties among teachers and students[106]. Numerous examples were not reported by the mainstream media, so distorting the actual circumstances. These attacks rely on effective pedagogy and learning, which hinder our national progress.

The period from December 2020 to August 2021 witnessed a series of attacks on Nigerian school students, resulting in the abduction of hundreds of children. This alarming trend elicited a national outcry regarding the state's apparent failure to prevent these incidents. The current surge in abductions is reminiscent of previous high-profile cases involving the mass abduction and murder of students, particularly the incidents concerning the Chibok and Dapchi girls. In evaluating the recent abductions, authorities and certain analysts have differentiated between current and past incidents based on the perceived identity of the perpetrators. Boko Haram was accountable for the Chibok and Dapchi abductions, whereas the attacks in 2020-21 are attributed to “bandits.”

The emphasis on the perpetrators, nonetheless, fails to elucidate how assaults on educational institutions integrate into the wider political economy of violence and insecurity in modern Nigeria, and the reasons behind the rapid expansion of kidnapping as an industry. Furthermore, the prevailing approach of primarily addressing abductions as security issues that necessitate an increased military and police presence, along with the physical reinforcement of educational institutions, focuses on the symptoms rather than the underlying causes.

The involvement of these security actors in corruption, violence, and the systemic abuse of civilians undermines their credibility as providers of security. Consequently, in the

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pursuit of safeguarding and rescuing students, Nigeria faces the risk of increased militarization and repression[107]. Nigerian students a lot of insecurity challenges particular abduction by people who user them as pawn to extort money from governments.

In December, there was one instance of mass abduction and one attempted abduction reported in Katsina State, located in the northwest region of the country. On 11 December, over 300 boys were taken from the Kankara Government Science Secondary School and were released a week later[108]. On the evening of 19 December, a total of eighty students at an Islamic school in Dandume, located approximately 60km from Kankara, were strategically detained by a kidnapping group that had previously abducted four other individuals. All eighty-four individuals were promptly liberated by law enforcement and a community self-defence organization[109]. In February 2021, two significant incidents of mass abduction occurred. On 17 February, a total of forty-two individuals, comprising twenty-seven students, were abducted from the Government Science College in Kagara, Niger State; additionally, one student lost their life during the incident[110]. On 26 February, a range of 279 to 317 students were abducted from the Government Girls Secondary School in Jangebe, located in Zamfara State[111].

In March 2021, there were two further mass abductions and three attempted abductions, all in Kaduna State. On 11 March, thirty-nine students were abducted from the Federal College of Forestry Mechanization in Mando[112]. On 13 March, a tip-off allowed the Nigerian army to prevent an attack on the Turkish International Secondary School, in Rigachikun[113]. While in Rigachikun, a distress call from the nearby Federal School of Forestry Mechanization in Afaka, which was under attack, saw the same army group intervene to rescue 180 people, including 172 students[114]. On the evening of 13 March

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and into the early hours of the following day, an attack on the Government Science Secondary School in Ikara was thwarted by combined action by Nigerian soldiers, police, and "volunteers''[115].

On 15 March, three teachers were abducted from Ube Primary School in Rama, Birnin Gwari. No children were taken[116]. The spate of abduction continued for the second consecutive month in April. On 20 April, twenty students and three staff from Greenfield University in Chikun, Kaduna State were abducted. Five students were killed by their captors, and the surviving students were released in May[117]. On 29 April, four students were kidnapped from the King's School, in Gana Ropp, Barkin Ladi, Plateau State. Three soon escaped captivity[118]. The month of May nearly went without an abduction until the 30th of May when 136 children and several teachers were abducted from the Salihu Tanko Islamic School in Tegina, Niger State. One died in captivity; the survivors were released in August[119].

The following month, 103 students were abducted from the Federal Government Girls College in Birnin Yauri, Kebbi State[120]. On 5 July, 121 children were abducted from the Bethel Baptist High School in Maramara, Kaduna State. On 16 August, fifteen students, a teacher, and his family, were abducted from the College of Agriculture in Bakura, Zamfara State; and, on 17 August, nine students were kidnapped on their way home from the Islamiyya school in Sakkai village in Faskari, Katsina State[121], [122].

Despite several regulatory attempts and institutional frameworks, many school-age children wander the streets of Nigeria. Nigeria disproportionately leads the global ranking of out-of-school children. Currently, over 16 million Out-Of-School Children (OOSC) reside in Nigeria, indicating that roughly one in five OOSC globally is associated with

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Nigeria. The figure rose from 8.7 million in 2014 to 13.2 million in 2015 and 16 million in 2019, respectively. However, this figure decreased to 6.95 million in 2020. The demographic composition of the out-of-school population encompasses children with disabilities, nomadic groups including pastoralists and migratory fishing communities, Almajiri pupils, and those displaced by violent conflicts in Nigeria, primarily in the northern states of Adamawa, Yobe, and Borno. These schools are adorned with a series of closures totalling approximately 802, of which around 497 classes were significantly sabotaged, while an additional 1,392 were completely destroyed. The evident increase in the number of out-of-school children in Nigeria can be attributed to heightened insecurity, inadequate institutional and policy frameworks, cultural norms, poverty, and the complete exclusion of children with disabilities from policy considerations.

This revealed the OOSC fragments and the likely provocations of the increasing inhabitants in Nigeria. This study employs a qualitative approach, mostly relying on secondary sources to investigate the complex issue of out-of-school children. The analysis indicates that, although a series of government policy interventions have contributed to a reduction in the number of out-of-school children (OOSC) in 2020, more strategic measures are required to further mitigate the escalation of the OOSC issue in the country[5].

Another study analysed the phenomenon of out-of-school children in Nigeria, the contributing elements, the societal ramifications, and proposed solutions. The paper utilized secondary data. The data were obtained from print and digital outlets. The study highlighted the causes of out-of-school children in Nigeria as inadequate educational financing, corruption, ineffective implementation of the Child Rights Act, security issues, lack of political will to address these challenges, elevated poverty rates, and high fertility

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rates. The researchers indicated that the social ramifications of out-of-school children encompass security concerns, a future deficit of skilled labour, a negative worldwide reputation, elevated illiteracy rates, and significant socio-economic and dependency issues. The report advised that federal, state, and local governments should develop programs to tackle the issue of out-of-school children in Nigeria. Furthermore, sufficient financing must be designated for the education sector across all governmental tiers[12].

The level of insecurity in Nigeria during the Buhari administration has escalated to a point that the administration is now viewed with suspicion. The focus on school children and college students underscores Boko Haram's declared objective of opposing Western education. The murder of Deborah Samuel by Boko Haram extremists, who asserted their outrage over her alleged blasphemous text message regarding the Holy Prophet Mohammed on her 200-level Home Economics WhatsApp platform at Shehu Shagari College of Education in Sokoto State, prompted a researcher to explore the impact of insecurity on girl-child education in Nigeria[123]. The study, utilizing the doctrinal method, examined the major concerns surrounding the abduction of schoolchildren and its detrimental effects on the future of education, particularly in the northern region.

The vulnerability of schools and students represents a soft target, effectively undermining the integrity of the Nigerian State in its constitutional duty to safeguard lives and property while promoting the right to education for Nigerian children. It concludes that both the State and the international community have failed to coordinate effectively, resulting in significant threats. It concludes that until the Buhari administration exits in 2023, the threat of instability to the nation's territorial integrity is unlikely to be mitigated, since the administration seems to be deeply entrenched with rebels, bandits, and terrorists[43].

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A related study examined "the consequences of insecurity on school administration in the Nigerian educational institutions". This study relied on secondary sources to back up its claims. Publications and books written by well-known institutions and individuals provided the data. The article posits that the root causes of insecurity in Nigeria include a lack of education, unemployment, poverty, marginalization, political considerations, foreign influence, and community crises.

According to this paper, insecurity in Nigerian schools has several negative effects, including a shortage of qualified teachers, low-quality instruction, damaged or destroyed school buildings, a loss of intellectual capital, the elimination of after-school programs, students' disincentive to continue their education, students' displacement from their homes, a drop in private funding for schools, and a general decline in educational leadership. This paper examines the effects of insecurity on Nigerian school administration and makes several recommendations for improving the situation. One of these is that the government should genuinely and honestly establish a political will to combat all types of insecurity in the country by implementing effective strategies[124].

The ongoing attacks on elementary schools, secondary schools, and higher education establishments, according to scholars have a negative impact on students' learning outcomes, teachers' work performance, and the processes involved in policy-making[125]. Educational stakeholders have reiterated that attacks on Nigerian elementary and secondary schools incite public uproar if government and security personnel do not take aggressive measures to stop them from happening again[49]. As another scholars points out, a lot of kids miss out on school opportunities in conflict-affected areas and never get a second chance[126]. Children who live in insecure environments are less likely to enrol in

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school successfully. Kidnapping, paedophilia, child molestation, and inhumane treatment of children are commonplace in many communities in northern Nigeria, particularly in the rural areas. Several professional instructors have left the northeastern region of Nigeria due to insecurity in the majority of the states of Adamawa, Yobe, and Borno. According to estimates, thousands of children have suffered injuries and hundreds of teachers have died[127].

Scholars have observed that Northern Nigeria has the highest level of out-of-school children because of violent conflicts, instability, anarchy, and disruption due to banditry activities. These issues prompted various studies. One of such studies focused on the impact of insecurity on educational activities in Niger State, Nigeria. The aims are to investigate the causes of insecurity in Niger State and to propose solutions to solve the issues of insecurity in Niger State and Nigeria as a whole. The Survey Research Design was implemented. Data were obtained through interviews with key informants, focus group discussions, and observations. Data were obtained through the secondary approach utilizing the internet, journals, books, newspapers, and other pertinent print items related to the study. The research utilized the Democratic Peace Theory to elucidate the impact of insecurity on educational activities in Niger State. Findings indicated that insecurity poses a danger to educational activities in Nigeria. The findings revealed that the effective execution of educational activities is contingent upon the cessation of insecurity[54].

The study consequently advised that the government should promote, assist, equip, and enhance local vigilantes; provide employment opportunities for the numerous youth; implement security measures to mitigate the threat; incorporate security management into the school curriculum; and religious organizations should prioritize educating their

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members about the potential devastation caused by the activities of these bandits. Scholars assert that insecurity within the school environment adversely affects children's learning efficacy. Insecure situations provoke traumatic disorders and toxic stress, adversely impacting learning[128].

Overall school attendance and enrolment are similarly impacted as parents withdraw their children from educational institutions, while in very extreme instances, insecurity has resulted in the shutdown of schools. For example, schools in key towns of Borno State were closed due to insurgency[129]. Attacks on schools typically result in vandalism and complete damage of educational infrastructure, so deterring the development of new institutions. Consequently, government resources are depleted when funding designated for other developmental initiatives are redirected to address the consequences of attacks. Ultimately, the quality of graduates and workforce diminishes, adversely affecting national development objectives.

The wellbeing of schoolchildren is currently a significant priority for stakeholders in Nigeria's education sector. This stems from the escalating issue of school insecurity, which is becoming as a significant burden nationwide. Parents and guardians are apprehensive regarding the safety of their children and wards amid terrorist assaults in Nigeria, especially in the northern region. Terrorist organizations, specifically Boko Haram and Bandits, are perpetrating violence, engaging in attacks, kidnappings, and bombings in public venues, including educational institutions. They abduct people, women, affluent and regular citizens, girls, schoolchildren, and educators.

The majority of the Chibok secondary school girls abducted by Boko Haram rebels in

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2014 have still not been found[130]. Even school assemblies were affected. Explosives were detonated during school assemblies or in proximity to the school.

Education in Northeastern Nigeria has been significantly disrupted, particularly due to the frequent murder and abduction of innocent pupils. Such occurrences have undoubtedly instilled terror in the minds of students, teachers, and parents, resulting in the withdrawal of students from schools or the prolonged closure of institutions by government or school officials. Similarly, in other regions of North-Central, religious conflicts have emerged, inciting violent assaults that hindered the uninterrupted education of pupils in schools. A significant number of Christian students were withdrawn from Mission schools located in Muslim-majority districts of Jos, and conversely, Muslim students faced similar withdrawals, owing to a series of religious assaults. The limited number of Christian students remaining in these institutions consistently engage in their academic pursuits with an underlying apprehension and careful conduct. Examples include Mission Secondary Schools situated in the Nasarawa region of Jos[131].

Various manifestations of school insecurity are prevalent. Examples include abductions, violent assaults, and cult activities. Kidnapping has been prevalent in Nigeria. Individuals, including males, females, children, educators, and students, are abducted nearly every day in the country, with ransom demands being made. Numerous reports indicate that kidnappers consistently demand ransoms in the millions of Naira, threatening to kill the hostages if the demands are not promptly fulfilled[132]. Optimal learning for the Nigerian child can only be attained in a stable and suitable educational atmosphere that fosters emotional stability.

Experts asserted that students' academic progress is significantly influenced by their

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emotional stability. An insecure learning environment subjects Nigerian pupils to stress, which can adversely impact their behaviour and hinder learning. Addressing these security challenges is essential for the Nigerian child's efficient and successful learning. This study aims to identify the concerns, prospects, and solutions related to insecurity in secondary schools in Nigeria based on this foundation[133].

Researchers also conducted a study on group communication as an effective instrument for managing Farmers/Herdsmen crises in Southern Kaduna, Nigeria. The study indicated that the elevated incidence of homicides perpetrated by armed bandits in certain areas of southern Kaduna, Nigeria, for over two years, has incapacitated social, economic, agricultural, educational, religious, and other activities in the region. Southern Kaduna serves as a geographical region favourable for both arable and cattle agriculture[134]. This claim is corroborated by another scholar who asserts that the Southern Kaduna senatorial area possesses fertile, agrarian soil and receives sufficient rainfall to ensure abundant crop yields[135].

Supporting the aforementioned claim, a researcher stated that Southern Kaduna, historically recognized for its tranquillity, is currently experiencing difficulties, with a significant portion of its population living in terror. Agriculturists apprehend visiting their farms due to the threat of assault. The aforementioned difficulties have severely hindered numerous economic operations, constituting a setback for the region[78].

In yet another study, the author indicated that there has been a recent increase in recorded assaults by herders who perpetrate violence against the inhabitants of agricultural villages, especially women and children, in various states nationwide. States such as Benue,

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Taraba, Nasarawa, Plateau, Kaduna, Katsina, and Zamfara have also experienced this unfortunate predicament[136]. Similarly, a related study identified that insecurity and terrorism pose significant problems to the Nigerian government. He asserted that the actions of the Islamic sect Boko Haram had resulted in the loss of lives and property in the country, particularly in Northern Nigeria. These actions include bombings, suicide bomb attacks, random shootings of unarmed and innocent civilians, arson of police stations and churches, and the abduction of schoolgirls and women. Kidnapping, rape, armed robbery, political conflicts, murder, and the destruction of oil installations by Niger Delta militants, together with attacks by Fulani herdsmen on various towns in the North and South, constitute significant security challenges for the country. The aforementioned author has explicitly indicated that every region of Nigeria has experienced its own portion of this difficulty[75].

Researchers from South east Nigeria also reported that Nigeria's deteriorating security situation has compelled an increasing number of schools to close, prompting many individuals to relocate both domestically and internationally. Due to insecurity, schools, particularly in northern Nigeria, have been closing in recent years without explicit government mandates, as school administrations could not provide safety[137]. A new dimension is emerging as state and federal governments mandate school closures due to security concerns. An order was issued to close certain schools in Abuja, the nation's capital, due to a terrorist threat, subsequently extending to neighbouring Nasarawa State. Abdullahi Sule, the governor of Nasarawa State, mandated the immediate closure of all public and private schools in the state as a precautionary measure to save kids from escalating insecurity.

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The Federal Government mandated the immediate closure of the Federal Government College, Kwali, located in the Kwali Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, due to a threat of attack by bandits. Business Day has reported that the situation has halted the current third term examinations at the school as well as the Senior School Certificate Examination conducted by the National Examinations Council. A mandate has been issued to all private schools in Abuja to close.

Frank Anya, a public affairs specialist, expresses concern that the northern region faces imminent intellectual and economic risks if not addressed promptly. “I believe it will persist throughout the Northern states until the administration can amend the situation.” Regarding the impact, anticipate a rise in the number of out-of-school children due to school closures, an escalation in the illiteracy rate in the most impacted region, and significant migration to places with relative security,” he stated[138].

He stated that this trend would precipitate a boom in urban migration and that brain drain would persistently increase. “Cities such as Lagos and others will experience heightened migration, perhaps exacerbating congestion and elevating the cost of living.” Furthermore, affluent parents in Abuja will emigrate from Nigeria, resulting in an exacerbation of brain drain moving forward. In the impacted states, the duration of the order may result in an increased unemployment rate, as teachers in the schools are unable to secure employment to support their families. Consequently, it contributes to increased poverty in these states,” he stated.

A scholar reported that one in three Nigerians intends to emigrate from the country due to insecurity. The prevalent concerns among the populace are "the protection of their lives

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and property, a deteriorating economy, corruption, and terrorism." He stated that insecurity in nations is increasing tremendously with each passing day[139]. The nation's turmoil will devolve into a pervasive miasma of bloodshed if essential measures are not implemented to mitigate the lethal chaos instigated by rebellious individuals around the country. The aforementioned author has explicitly said that every Nigerian is impacted by the issue of insecurity. From the perspective of another scholar, insecurity in Nigeria is perpetuated by corruption and corrupt individuals across all sectors. Approximately 98 million Nigerians exist in extreme poverty, rendering the country the global epicentre of poverty, with a significant proportion of this demographic being young and children. The aforementioned argument clarifies that poverty is the primary cause of insecurity in the nation, stemming from corrupt leadership[140].

Some Northerners have abandoned their residences to seek asylum in IDP camps and adjacent nations. Reports indicate that certain youths from Sokoto State declined the governor's appeal to come home, preferring the tranquillity of Niger Republic. He stated that abduction is increasingly becoming a business in the nation, with both prominent and ordinary citizens being abducted for ransom. Ultimately, pupils endure the greatest hardship from this process. Educational institutions have become perilous environments for pupils in Katsina, Kaduna, Zamfara, and numerous other northern states. The fate of several abducted pupils in these regions remains uncertain. Due to the apprehension of potential kidnappings, parents now favour keeping their children at home instead of sending them to school. Sporadic gunfire has claimed the lives of numerous potential youths. Herdsmen are also contributing negatively. Numerous farmers have abandoned their agricultural lands to ensure their protection from the lethal pastoralists. The

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aforementioned author has explicitly delineated the causes and effects of insecurity in some states of Nigeria[141].

The prevalence of insecurity has resulted in significant emotional distress for many Nigerians, particularly those residing in Niger State. During our interview with Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) residing in a camp. He stated, “I have been reflecting on the trauma she has endured since the bandits have taken control of a substantial portion of Niger State.” He elaborated, “The schools in our region have been compelled to close, and our children are unable to recall the last time they attended school due to the ongoing banditry. We have escaped from our villages and are now living here as outsiders.” This aligns with a related study, which indicates that insecurity within the school environment affects children's effective learning[142].

Insecured situations can lead to the onset of traumatic disorders and toxic stress, which adversely impact learning outcomes. School attendance and enrolment are significantly impacted as parents withdraw their children from educational institutions, and in severe instances, insecurity has resulted in the closure of schools. For example, schools in major towns of Borno State experienced closures due to the ongoing insurgency[143].

The attacks on schools typically result in vandalism and significant damage to educational facilities, which undermines efforts to establish new schools. Consequently, government properties are depleted as financial resources designated for other developmental initiatives are redirected to address the consequences of attacks. The quality of graduates and manpower ultimately deteriorates, adversely affecting the broader goals of national development.

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Another individual in the same camp, identifying as Shekwolo, reported that "the bandits arrive in our village during midday, killing some residents and abducting the head teacher of our school. They have compelled us to abandon our villages and farms, which are essential for our income and survival, and our children have been forced to leave school." This response aligns with the findings of another scholar who emphasized that the wellbeing of school children is a primary concern for stakeholders in Nigeria's education sector. This situation arises from the growing issue of school insecurity, which is increasingly presenting a significant challenge nationwide[144]. Concerns among parents and guardians regarding the safety of their children and wards have intensified due to the threat of terrorist attacks in Nigeria, especially in the northern regions. Boko Haram and Bandits are actively engaging in violent activities, including attacks, kidnappings, and bombings in public spaces such as schools. Adults, women, affluent and average citizens, girls, school children, and teachers are all potential targets for kidnapping. A significant number of the 276 Chibok secondary school girls abducted by Boko Haram insurgents in 2014 remain unaccounted for.

Another victim reported, "They arrived in our village (Akare) and, upon realizing that we had fled for our lives, they burned all our farm produce, including yam, rice, soya beans, maize, and guinea corn, among others, and also set our school on fire." The aforementioned responses align with research conducted regarding group communication as an effective strategy for managing farmers' and herders' crises in Southern Kaduna, Nigeria. The study found that the rate of killings in certain areas of Southern Kaduna by armed bandits over the years has severely impacted economic, socio-economic, educational, and other activities. During our interview with the village head of Shengu,

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he expressed that 'we are all living in fear; at times we sleep in the bushes, and our children no longer attend school because it has been shut down due to the actions of these malevolent individuals[145].' The aforementioned response aligns with findings from a study which indicated that students are the most affected by this issue. Schools in Katsina, Kaduna, Zamfara, and several other Northern States have become hazardous environments for students.

A resident from Erena in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger state, who sought refuge in the nearby town of Gwada, recounted the situation, expressing concern that "we are unable to access our farms during this critical harvest period, as all the villagers have evacuated to larger settlements in search of safety." A prominent political figure in the Local Government provided an account detailing that on May 5, 2022, bandits infiltrated a military camp in the Zazzaga community. This incident occurred shortly after a prior attack on the military base in Alawa, Shiroro Local Government Area, which resulted in the deaths of five soldiers and a mobile policeman, alongside the destruction of the base. Following this, the bandits advanced into the communities, where they killed seven individuals and abducted several others. Majority of studied reviewed so far have focused on the norther and eastern part of Nigeria.

The investigation focused on the impact of banditry and kidnapping on the development of specific tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The study was conducted in North Central Nigeria, sampling eight higher institutions that have experienced bandit attacks. These institutions include Government Science College in Kagara, Niger State; Kwara State University in Malete; Kogi State University in Anyigba; Kogi State Polytechnic in Lokoja; Federal University of Agriculture in Makurdi (FUAM), Benue State; University

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of Abuja; Plateau State University; and Plateau State Polytechnic. A cross-sectional research design was employed to examine data gathered from three hundred and twenty-one (321) survey participants across eight (8) higher institutions in North Central Nigeria. To interpret the survey data and formulate the final findings, the study utilized both descriptive and inferential statistics. The survey responses were presented graphically and in tabular form, with frequency and Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) applied for pretesting. T-statistics and probit regression analysis were employed as inferential tools, and the results were interpreted to finalize the research findings[146].

The findings indicate that banditry and kidnapping have a likelihood ratio of 279:749 regarding their effect on the development of tertiary institutions, with a corresponding significance value of 0:000. This leads to the conclusion that banditry and kidnapping significantly impact the development of tertiary institutions. The probit analysis indicates a value of 144.617 (0.000), and the t-statistics further demonstrate that banditry and kidnapping activities exert a significant negative impact on educational activities in North Central Nigeria. Additionally, educational activities exhibit a very low tolerance for these criminal activities. The study recommends that the Government enhance the capabilities of security personnel by providing them with advanced weapons, communication tools, and logistical support. This enabled a direct confrontation with bandits. Additionally, incorporating local vigilantes, who have a deep understanding of the terrain in the extensive ungoverned forest, into the security framework is essential for effectively addressing the issue and eliminating the bandits from their hiding places[19].

The multiplier effect of banditry and kidnapping indicates that it has hindered the growth and development of education, particularly in tertiary institutions in Northern Nigeria.

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Banditry and kidnapping represent a detrimental force that yields no positive outcomes for anyone involved. Nigerian society is currently defined by the prevalence of kidnapping, which has become widespread, fostering an environment marked by fear, impunity, and insecurity throughout the nation[19].

Moreover, the political unrest has exacerbated the internal security situation in Nigeria, instilling a pervasive sense of fear among its citizens, as there have been numerous instances of farmers-herdsmen conflicts in various states throughout the nation. The prevalence of these attacks is rising, fostering an environment characterized by fear, impunity, and insecurity within the country. This situation is adversely impacting the advancement of tertiary institutions, food security, and overall socio-economic development.

Peace enables the realization of various possibilities; without it, life lacks significance. Higher learning institutions in Nigeria and around the world encounter numerous challenges in fulfilling their responsibilities. The primary challenge confronting them is the persistent issue of insecurity, which appears unlikely to resolve in the foreseeable future within higher institutions, largely attributable to the rise of banditry and the abduction of students for ransom. The absence of peace results in widespread destruction, significant insecurity, intimidation, and fear, which can ultimately lead to the closure of schools, halting educational activities for an entire academic session. Nigerian institutions confronting insecurity have encountered numerous challenges regarding academic development and the degradation of infrastructure[92].

The primary forms of insecurity in Nigeria include cultism, political thuggery, conflicts between herders and farmers, and incidents of kidnapping and banditry. This research

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primarily examines the issues of kidnapping and banditry as they pertain to tertiary institutions, along with their implications for the socio-economic development of Northern Nigeria. Initially, individuals involved in kidnappings in Nigeria for ransom primarily focused on the elite class and their close relatives. A notable case is the abduction of Hajiya Laraba Abdullahi, the mother of former Nigerian Football Federation President Alhaji Sani Lulu. She was taken from her affluent residence in Idah, Kogi State, at 6:45 PM in July 2010 and transported to an undisclosed location[92].

However, the phenomenon of kidnapping has evolved, as perpetrators are now targeting not only high-profile individuals but also middle-class citizens, civil servants, and travelers from other states, among others. For instance, the Kaduna State Police Command reported that gunmen in Nigeria kidnapped a minimum of 140 schoolchildren in the north-west region of the country from July to December 2021. Eight individuals were taken from the National Tuberculosis and Leprosy Centre in Zaria. Previously, two nurses and a 12-month-old child were included among those taken. Recently, there has been an increase in abductions occurring at schools and universities for ransom[147].

Studies indicates that there were mass kidnappings from a school located near Kaduna city, approximately 80 km (50 miles) south-west of Zaria. Additionally, the abduction of the Kagara school students occurred alongside an assault on a commercial bus, NSTA, owned by the Niger state government at Kundu. More than 20 passengers were taken while they were en-route to Minna after returning from Rijau in the Rijau local government area of the state[148]. In a recent incident, Mallam Ibrahim Balarabe, the Chief of Staff to Governor Abubakar Sani Bello of Niger state, narrowly avoided abduction by armed bandits while he was returning from his hometown in Kagara, located in the Rafi

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local government area of the state. The recent increase in such incidents raises significant concerns, as numerous victims are forcibly taken to undisclosed locations, where ransoms are demanded, leading to the exploitation of their families' hard-earned resources.

The Southwest of Nigeria is also not free from security challenges that fuel out of school children. As kidnapping became well entrenched in the southeast, many incidents were also recorded in the southwest most of which were criminal kidnappings of high-profile persons. On 21 September 2015, some armed men kidnapped Olu Falae, Nigeria's former Finance Minister, in a village near Akure, the Ondo state capital. He was released three days later after paying an undisclosed amount as ransom. Kidnap hotspots in the southwest include Ekiti, Ogun and Ondo as well as Oyo states. Also, there have been recorded incidents in Lagos where domestic employees were found to have facilitated a number of incidents. For example, on 14 September 2015, the wife of a deputy managing director of one of Nigeria's newspapers was kidnapped at her home through the help of one of her domestic employees. This sort of kidnapping is described as insider kidnapping[149].

Another study bordering on insecurity in southwest Nigeria evaluated the socio-economic consequences of child kidnapping and abduction in South Western Nigeria, focusing on Akure in Ondo State as a specific case study. The process involved identifying the factors contributing to child kidnapping and abduction, examining the impact of such incidents on both children and parents, assessing the level of security, and pinpointing areas within the study region that are susceptible to kidnapping and abduction. The research utilized a random sampling technique for selecting respondents. The collected data were organized and displayed through tables, graphs, and charts. The data indicated that 71.9% of the

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total population concurred that approximately 11 or more children had been kidnapped in the past 5 years. Furthermore, 58% acknowledged that the children experienced significant discomfort post-release, while 68% recognized that this situation impacted their ability to interact with peers. Notably, 100% agreed that the self-esteem of the children was adversely affected. 60.6% expressed dissatisfaction with the handling of the incident by the Nigeria Police Force, while 68.8% of respondents indicated that they no longer feel secure walking in the dark[150].

The study recommends the provision of adequate security measures, the imposition of penalties on offenders, and the education of children regarding appropriate responses to suspicious activities in their vicinity. Additionally, it suggests the consideration of economic revitalization and empowerment initiatives aimed at enhancing the standard of living, particularly for low-income individuals. Furthermore, it emphasizes the necessity for the government to ensure equitable distribution of infrastructure to mitigate marginalization.

2.3.3 Incidence of Insecurity in Oyo State

Researchers have also compiled a list of various crises constantly rocking Oyo State that might contribute to out-of-school-children in the state. A scholar reported on a rise in communal conflicts in Oke Ogun part of Oyo State. An examination of the historical context of conflict in this area identified key factors such as competition for land and natural resources, territorial disputes, and traditional chieftaincy struggles. Additional factors encompass doctrinal differences, insufficient communal respect for the host community, and the pursuit of positions of authority and power, which have resulted in both interpersonal and intra/inter-group conflicts within the communities[151].

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Some of the key flashpoints are the Irawo communities within the Atisbo Local Government areas, including Ago-Are, Tede, Irawo, Sabe, Bassi, and Offiki, represents one of numerous violent conflicts occurring in this region of Nigeria. The conflict has persisted for decades, originating in 1952 with the death of Oba Ajoriwin "Aderinola"[152]. The Edu and Ogbo ruling families engaged in a protracted struggle for the throne, ultimately resulting in the division of the town into two distinct communities. The Edu relocated to Irawo–Owode, which is situated three kilometres from Irawo-Ile. This position was upheld until the mid-1960s, when a resolution resulted in the establishment of the common front - Irawo Parapo Community. In addition to the competition for the throne, individuals continued to identify the root of the conflict as the contest for dominance over the valuable gemstone deposits found in certain communities.

Nonetheless, government intervention failed to provide a sustainable resolution to the crisis, as one faction was dominated by another during the period of the Alliance for Democracy (AD) political party in 2001. Subsequently, the community experienced fragmentation as the governing body opposed the rival faction. Shortly after the return of Oba Ajoriwin, who had been in exile for four years, an invasion occurred in Irawo-Owode, resulting in widespread chaos, destruction of property, and random gunfire into the air.

A further instance of community conflict involves the Bororos from the Niger Republic, who typically migrate into Nigeria via the Benin Republic, which borders Nigeria in the northern region of Oyo State (Saki, Kisi, Igboho, Igbeti). In the dry season, they migrate between regions to locate suitable forage for their livestock. During this period, FADAMA farmers reach the height of their production, resulting in the obstruction of

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cattle routes and waterways. Consequently, grazing animals invade the cultivated farmlands, leading to crop damage. These frequently led to conflicts between farmers and pastoralists, resulting in loss of life and property. Conflicts of a similar nature have been documented between the Tiv and Fulani/Jugun in Benue State[153].

The underdevelopment of Nigeria can be attributed to several factors, including ongoing ethno-religious conflicts, territorial encroachment by neighbouring communities such as Igbojaye/Ofiki and Saki/Ogboro, as well as persistent divisions stemming from tribal, geographical, or religious differences[154]. The ongoing conflicts likely resulted in negative impacts on agricultural production, particularly through internal population displacement, unnecessary fatalities, injuries, and the destruction of infrastructure. The presence of conflict in certain areas likely influenced the frequency of visits and training sessions conducted by extension personnel, as the fear of potential attacks may have deterred their engagement with farm families. What these studies have failed to identify is that these ancient conflicts are laying the foundation for the rise of out of school children in Oyo State

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2.4 Conceptual Model

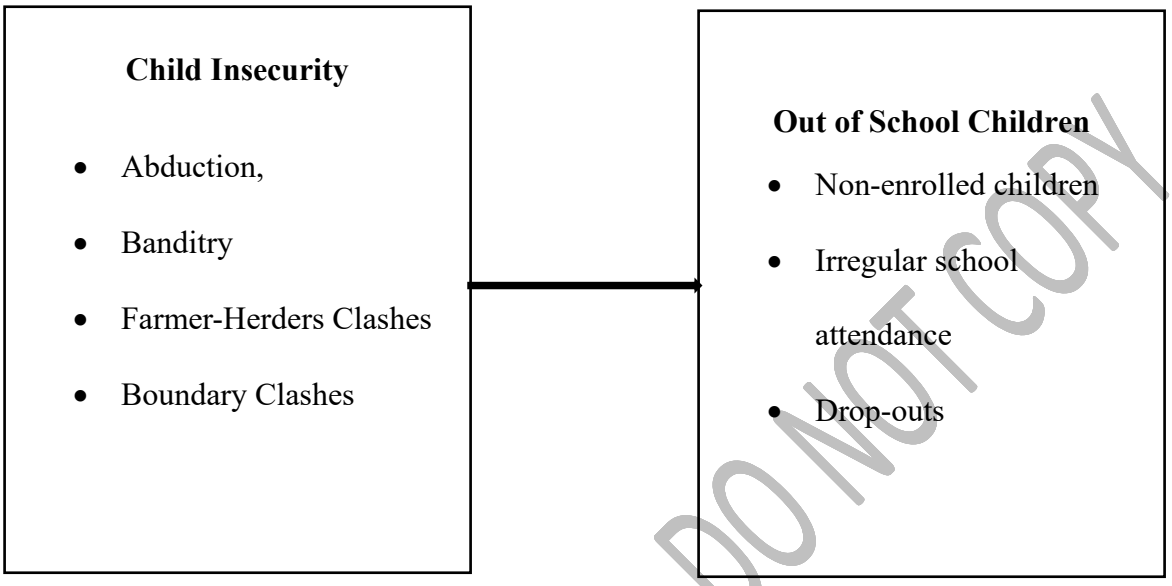


Figure 2.3: Conceptual Model on the Influence of Insecurity on Out-of-School Children in Oyo State, Nigeria

Source: The Researcher, 2024

2.5 Summary of Gap in Literature Reviewed

The literature on the influence of insecurity on out-of-school children in Oyo State, Nigeria, provides a comprehensive understanding of how various forms of insecurity affect children's education. Key themes in the literature include the impact of violence, poverty, and social instability on educational access, as well as the broader societal implications of having a significant number of out-of-school children. The literature highlights multiple forms of insecurity that contribute to the rising number of out-of-school children. These include communal clashes, violent crime, political unrest, and economic instability. In Oyo

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State, regional conflicts and periodic clashes between local communities have disrupted the daily lives of residents, leading to school closures, displacements, and reduced access to educational facilities. Insecurity creates a hostile environment for learning, making it difficult for children to attend school regularly.

Research also emphasizes that insecurity impacts families' ability to send their children to school. Economic hardship resulting from insecurity, such as loss of livelihoods and displacement, forces many families to de-prioritize education in favour of meeting basic needs. Many families withdraw their children from school to engage them in income-generating activities. Moreover, insecurity often exacerbates existing social issues like poverty, which disproportionately affects marginalized and low-income households, contributing to high dropout rates.

The literature also points to the degradation of school infrastructure due to insecurity. Schools are frequently targets of violence, vandalism, or military occupation in conflict zones. In Oyo State, insecure regions have seen reduced investment in education, further discouraging parents from enrolling their children. The lack of a safe and conducive learning environment often leads to lower enrolment and higher dropout rates. Studies also address the psychological impact of insecurity on children. Insecure environments create stress and trauma, which can hinder a child’s capacity to learn and stay engaged in school. Fear of violence on the way to or from school, and within school premises, leads to absenteeism and withdrawal from school entirely.

The literature suggests that insecurity has a disproportionately negative impact on girls. In regions affected by insecurity, families are more likely to withdraw girls from school due to concerns about safety or to prevent early marriages. This gender-based exclusion further

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compounds the issue of educational inequality, limiting girls' future opportunities and exacerbating poverty cycles. In addition, the literature also connects the rising number of out-of-school children to broader societal consequences, such as increased juvenile delinquency, child labour, and involvement in criminal activities. Insecure environments create conditions where children are more likely to be exploited, recruited into gangs, or radicalized by extremist groups. This ultimately undermines social cohesion and economic development in the region.

Some of the literature reviewed also points to potential solutions, including improving security measures around schools, providing financial support to vulnerable families, and enhancing community involvement in education. Ensuring access to safe and affordable education in insecure regions requires a multifaceted approach involving government policies, community support, and international aid.

Overall, the reviewed literature establishes a strong link between insecurity and the rising number of out-of-school children in Oyo State, Nigeria. Insecurity not only disrupts the educational system but also creates long-term social and economic challenges. Addressing these issues requires coordinated efforts to improve security, provide financial and infrastructural support, and protect the educational rights of children, particularly in conflict-affected areas.

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Endnotes

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Chapter Three
Methodology

This chapter present the framework that guides the conduct of the research. It outlines the research design, delineates the research population and documents the procedure for selecting the study sample. The chapter also indicate the research instrument as well as the approach to the data processing adopted in the study.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The adoption of this design allowed the research to collect a rich blend of data that can provide the best insight into the role of insecurity on the rate of out-of-school children in Oyo State. This is because the mixed research method supports the collection of data through instruments such as questionnaire which can then be triangulate with qualitative data obtained from sources such as interview and focus group discussions[1].

3.2 Population of the Study

The study population refers to the collective individuals, entities, or objects that are the subject of investigation or from whose data were collected[2]. The population of the consisted of community leaders, education officers and information gate-keepers selected from various wards from Oyo State local governments such as Kajola, Olorunsogo, Ogo Oluwa, Oorelope, Iwajowa, Ibarapa Central, Ibarapa East, Ibarapa North, Oyo East, and Itesiwaju local government areas. These local governments were selected because they were among the most affected by instability caused by farmer-herder clashes, kidnapping and banditry.

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3.3 Sampling Technique and Sampling Size

The sample of this study consist of one hundred (100) residents of selected local governments in areas mostly affected by insecurity in Oyo State. The researcher adopted a purposive sampling technique to select people who can provide answers to the research questions. In line with this, the researcher selected ten (10) information gatekeepers from Kajola, Olorunsogo, Ogo Oluwa, Oorelope, Iwajowa, Ibarapa Central, Ibarapa East, Ibarapa North, Oyo East, and Itesiwaju local government areas. In addition to this, local government desk officer of the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) in each of the local government were interviewed.

3.4 Description of the Research Instrument

The researcher made use of two research instruments namely; a structured questionnaire and an interview guide. The questionnaire is the main instrument of the study as it was used to collect data from the residents[3]. The questionnaire was divided into five main sections in line with the objectives of the research.

Section A; This consisted mainly of the demographic information about the respondents, example of questions in the section included; gender, local government area, occupation, etc

Section B contains questions related to the Prevalence of Out-of-School Children in Oyo State. The items in this section were adapted from previous works on the subject of out of school children. The section is made up of five items. Examples of items in the section include; “There has been a significant increase in the number of out-of-school children in Oyo State over the last decade”; “The issue of out-of-school children is more prevalent in

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rural areas of Oyo State than urban areas'; All of the items are rated on 4 points Likert Scale, e.g.; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

Section C focused on the sources of insecurity affecting school attendance. The section guides the respondents to identify various security issues that discourage students in their localities from school attendance or enrolment. In all, the section has five items. Examples of the statements and questions include: "Insecurity due to gang-related violence in my community prevents children from going to school."; "Fear of kidnappings and school attacks prevents children from attending school." etc. All of the items are rated on 4 points Likert Scale, e.g.; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

Section D contains questions related to the Impact of Insecurity on Access to Education. The items in this section were adapted from a research work based the factors affecting out-of-school children. Examples of items in the section include; "Insecurity has caused teachers to leave schools, leading to poor education quality." "Incidents of school attacks have led to a decline in children's attendance.; All of the items are rated on 4 points Likert Scale, e.g.; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

3.5 Validity of the Research Instrument

Validity is the degree to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measured. The research instrument was tested for content and face validity by the research supervisor and other experts in the field. Their suggestions and amendments were incorporated into the final version of the instrument.

3.6 Reliability of the Research Instrument

The reliability of the research instrument was measured through a pre-test. The researcher administered the research instrument on twenty (20) people from Ido local government, Oyo State who are not part of the original study. The responses were analysed to determine the Cronbach alpha value of each section of the scale[4]. The results of the analysis revealed that the research instrument has a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.83.

3.7 Administration of the Research Instrument

The main instrument is the questionnaire as it was deployed to collect data from a large number of respondents who can provide a diverse opinion on the subject matter. The researcher set out to administer hundred copies of the research questionnaire. However, the researcher could only retrieve ninety-one (91) copies of the questionnaire from the respondents. This is because only those questionnaires that were properly filled were considered.

A letter introducing the researcher as a student was obtained from Lead City University Ibadan. This letter proved to the respondents that the researcher was conducting sanctioned research with approved ethical clearance from the institutions. The researcher administered the questionnaire with the aid of two research assistants who were properly trained for three days on the process of the data collection. The collection of data lasted for two weeks.

The qualitative data collection was also conducted after proper introduction to the respondents. The researcher made contact with each of the respondents and booked appointment for a convenient day for the interview. Some of the interviews were conducted physically while others were conducted virtually using phone calls and video calls.

3.8 Method of Data Collection

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Quantitative methodology used numerical data collection techniques to facilitate statistical analysis. This study used structured surveys or questionnaires as data collection instruments to gather quantitative information pertaining to income, education, and perceptions of safety risks among families. Quantitative methodologies provide a means for doing statistical research and identifying patterns and relationships pertaining to socioeconomic barriers.

Qualitative methodology used non-numerical data in order to explore the intricacies and nuances of the subject under investigation. Qualitative data on schooling and socioeconomic challenges may be obtained via the use of in-depth interviews or focus group discussions with selected families. Qualitative methodologies provide a comprehensive perspective on many circumstances, allowing for a deeper understanding of the context and perhaps uncovering latent characteristics that quantitative data may fail to capture.

The use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches is justified by using a triangulated approach, whereby the outcomes derived from one methodology serve to complement and validate those obtained from the other. The use of a dual-method approach offers a more comprehensive understanding of the rising incidence of out of school children in Oyo State. Quantitative data provide statistical evidence and capture overarching trends, but qualitative data offer nuanced perspectives and personal narratives, so presenting a more intricate portrayal of educational challenges faced by families.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

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The data analysis methods adopted in this study are in line with the research design. The quantitative data collected was analysed using descriptive analysis such as frequency, percentages, and mean scores. The analysis was done using the IBM SPSS data analytics software. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) is a valuable tool used by academics to facilitate the analysis of socioeconomic obstacles, establish correlations between variables, and identify statistically significant patterns within their data.

The qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews was analysed using thematic analysis. The thematic analysis approach systematically finds, analysis, and presents qualitative data topics. In line with this, the analysis followed the themes of the study as represented by the research questions. The responses were analysed in line with how the fit with each research questions. This ensures that the analysis of qualitative data is conducted in a thorough manner, and that ideas are derived from the data itself rather than being imposed.

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3.10 Ethical Consideration

Ethical measures were put in place to safeguard the dignity, rights, and welfare of all research participants. During the administration of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, this research adhered to two fundamental principles of social research ethics: (1) obtaining informed consent and ensuring voluntary participation, and (2) maintaining anonymity and confidentiality.

Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation

For the questionnaires, individuals were randomly selected and verbally asked if they wished to take part in the study. It was made explicit that participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any stage while completing the questionnaire without having to provide a reason. The act of completing and submitting the questionnaire was taken as a sign of consent.

For the interviews, potential stakeholders were initially approached in person and invited to take part in the research. Each participant's informed consent was sought, allowing them to decide whether or not to participate. Consent to audio-record the interview and permission to use their names in the analysis (or not) were also requested.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity is a key ethical practice to protect participants' identities and the information they provide. Participants in the questionnaires were given a verbal explanation of the research and informed that the data would be analysed in an aggregated form, making it impossible to link responses back to individual participants. Paper-based questionnaires were later transcribed into digital format for analysis.

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Endnotes

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Chapter Four

Results and Discussion of Findings

This chapter presents the results of the fieldwork conducted in the course of this research. The research adopted two research instruments namely; a structured questionnaire and an interview guide to collect data from the respondents. This represents a 91% return rate which is considered adequate for generalisation. There is also a section for the discussion of the study findings. The decision rule for the descriptive design is based on mean scores; mean scores between 0.1 – 1.9 are considered very low; 2.0 -2.49, low; 2.5- 2.99, moderate; 3.0-49 is high; and 3.5-4.0 is very high.

In addition, the researcher also interviewed some information gatekeepers. The responses are presented in a thematic analysis in this chapter. The responses are considered necessary for proper triangulation of the quantitative results.

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4.1 Demographic Analysis

Table 4.1 Demographic Data of Respondent by Gender, age, and education (N=91)

Items		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	37	40.7
	Female	54	59.3
Age	26-40 years	18	19.8
	41-55 years	36	39.6
	56-70 years	33	36.3
	Above 70 years	4	4.4
Education	No formal education	5	5.5
	Only primary education	82	90.1
	Only secondary education	1	1.1
	Tertiary education	3	3.3

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2025

Table 4.1 provides a breakdown of the demographic data for the study's respondents, highlighting key insights about their gender, age, and educational background. The data reveals a higher proportion of female respondents (59.3%) compared to males (40.7%). This suggests a gender imbalance in the sample, which may have implications for the study's results, particularly if gender is a variable that could influence the research outcomes. For instance, if the study relates to behavioural patterns, resource access, or decision-making processes, the predominance of female respondents may skew the findings toward female perspectives. This gender distribution also raises questions about the underlying population from which the sample was drawn, such as whether women are more accessible, available, or willing to participate in such studies.

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The age distribution is heavily weighted toward middle-aged and older adults, with 39.6% of respondents aged 41–55 years and 36.3% aged 56–70 years. Together, these groups account for nearly 76% of the sample, indicating that the study is primarily capturing the perspectives of mature individuals. Only 19.8% of the respondents are between 26–40 years, while just 4.4% are above 70 years. This skewed age distribution may reflect the demographics of the target population, but it also suggests that younger perspectives are underrepresented. If the study involves variables such as technology adoption, innovation, or social behaviours, the age profile might influence the results, as older individuals may have different experiences and preferences compared to younger age groups.

The educational data shows that a significant majority of respondents (90.1%) have only primary education, with 5.5% reporting no formal education. Secondary and tertiary education levels are represented minimally at 1.1% and 3.3%, respectively. This overwhelmingly low level of formal education among respondents provides valuable context for interpreting the study's findings. For instance, if the research involves concepts requiring higher cognitive or technical understanding, the limited educational attainment might act as a constraint. Additionally, this demographic characteristic could indicate broader societal challenges, such as access to education or literacy rates, particularly if the study is conducted in a rural or underserved area.

The demographic analysis offers critical insights into the sample population, which are essential for both interpreting the results and assessing their generalizability. The high representation of women, age concentration among middle-aged and older individuals, and low levels of formal education all suggest that the study adequately captures local people,

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women and people of child-bearing age who are likely to be affected by the issue of children access to education.

4.2 Presentation of Research Questions

4.2.1 How does the prevalence of out-of-school children in Ibarapa region of Oyo state reflect issues of educational equity, governance, and societal priorities in education?

Table 4.2 Current Prevalence of Out-of-School Children in Ibarapa Oyo State

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
There has been a significant increase in the number of out-of-school children in Ibarapa Oyo State over the last decade.	31 (34.1 %)	36 (39.6 %)	17 (18.7%)	7 (7.7 %)	3.00
Most children in my community have consistent access to education.	21 (23.1%)	35 (38.5%)	8 (8.8%)	27 (29.7 %)	2.55
The government has taken measures to reduce the number of out-of-school children.	22 (24.2 %)	54 (59.3 %)	15 (16.0%)	--	3.08
Poverty is a major factor contributing to children dropping out of school in Oyo State.	29 (31.9 %)	38 (41.8 %)	24 (26.4 %)	--	3.05
The issue of out-of-school children is more prevalent in rural areas of Oyo State than urban areas.	38 (41.8 %)	32 (35.2%)	--	21 (23.1%)	2.96
Aggregate mean					2.93

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2025

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Table 4.2 provides an analysis of the current prevalence of out-of-school children in Oyo State, based on respondents' perceptions. The aggregate mean score of 2.93 indicates a high level of agreement across most statements, suggesting that the issue of out-of-school children is a significant concern among people in Oyo State. A majority of respondents (34.1% strongly agree, 39.6% agree) perceive that there has been a significant increase in the number of out-of-school children in Oyo State over the last decade. However, 18.7% disagree, and 7.7% strongly disagree. The mean score of 3.00 reflects general consensus on the rising prevalence of out-of-school children. This trend may be tied to systemic challenges such as poverty, infrastructural deficiencies, or policy gaps.

Regarding whether most children in the community have consistent access to education, 23.1% strongly agree and 38.5% agree. However, 8.8% disagree, and a substantial 29.7% strongly disagree. The mean score of 2.55 highlights significant variability in responses, suggesting inconsistent access to education in many communities. These disparities may stem from unequal resource allocation, particularly between rural and urban areas, or barriers such as school fees, transportation challenges, and cultural factors.

A significant proportion of respondents (24.2% strongly agree, 59.3% agree) believe that the government has taken measures to reduce the number of out-of-school children. Only 16.0% disagree, while no respondents strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.08 reflects a positive perception of governmental efforts. However, the disagreement among a minority indicates scepticism about the effectiveness or equitable reach of these initiatives, underscoring the need for better implementation and transparency.

A large percentage of respondents (31.9% strongly agree, 41.8% agree) attribute the issue of out-of-school children to poverty. Meanwhile, 26.4% disagree, and no respondents

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strongly disagree. The mean score of 3.05 underscores the significant role of economic hardship as a barrier to education. These findings suggest that poverty alleviation programs, such as conditional cash transfers or free education policies, could play a critical role in addressing the issue.

When asked whether the issue of out-of-school children is more prevalent in rural areas than urban areas, 41.8% strongly agree and 35.2% agree. However, 23.1% disagree, and no respondents strongly disagree. The mean score of 2.96 reflects a strong consensus about the rural-urban divide in educational access. This perception aligns with known challenges in rural areas, such as fewer schools, long travel distances, and limited teacher availability, which disproportionately affect school enrolment and retention.

The aggregate mean score of 2.93 indicates an overall agreement on the prevalence and severity of the out-of-school children issue in Oyo State. While respondents recognize government efforts, poverty and rural-urban disparities remain significant barriers. The relatively high percentages of disagreement and strong disagreement in some statements, particularly regarding access to education (38.5% combined), highlight the need for targeted interventions.

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4.2.2 What are the sources of insecurity militating against school attendance by pupils in Ibarapa region Oyo State.

Table 4.3: Sources of Insecurity Militating against School Attendance by Pupils in Oyo State.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
Fear of kidnappings and school attacks prevents children from attending school.	23 (25.3%)	61 (67.0%)	--	7 (7.7 %)	3.10
Armed conflicts between local groups or communities negatively affect school attendance.	38 (41.8%)	22 (24.2%)	25 (27.5 %)	6 (6.6%)	3.01
Banditry and violence are key sources of insecurity preventing children from attending school.	32 (35.2%)	51 (56.0%)	3 (3.3%)	5 (5.5%)	3.21
Insecurity due to gang-related violence in my community prevents children from going to school.	19 (20.9%)	39 (42.9%)	12 (13.2%)	21 (23.1%)	2.62
Lack of security measures around schools is a concern for parents and children.	39 (42.9 %)	32 (35.2%)	--	18 (19.8%)	3.03
Aggregate mean					2.99

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2025

Table 4.3 analyses the sources of insecurity militating against school attendance by pupils in Oyo State. The aggregate mean score of 2.99 suggests a generally high level of agreement with the identified sources of insecurity. A significant majority of respondents (25.3% strongly agree, 67.0% agree) believe that fear of kidnappings and school attacks

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prevents children from attending school. Only 7.7% strongly disagree, and no respondents disagreed, resulting in a mean score of 3.10. This high level of agreement underscores the pervasive concern about safety in schools, likely stemming from recent incidents of kidnappings and attacks in Nigeria.

Respondents also identified armed conflicts between local groups or communities as a significant factor affecting school attendance, with 41.8% strongly agreeing and 24.2% agreeing. However, 27.5% disagreed, and 6.6% strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.01 reflects a general acknowledgment of this issue, although the relatively higher percentage of disagreement indicates that its impact may vary across different areas. This could depend on the frequency and intensity of conflicts in specific communities.

Banditry and violence were rated as key sources of insecurity preventing children from attending school, with 35.2% strongly agreeing and 56.0% agreeing. Only 3.3% disagreed, and 5.5% strongly disagreed, resulting in a mean score of 3.21—the highest in the table. This indicates a strong consensus that banditry and violence are significant deterrents to school attendance, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to address these issues, such as increased law enforcement presence and community policing.

Another source of insecurity fuelling the out-of-school children phenomenon in Oyo State is identified as gang-related violence. When asked about insecurity due to gang-related violence, 20.9% strongly agreed, and 42.9% agreed, while 13.2% disagreed, and 23.1% strongly disagreed. The mean score of 2.62, the lowest in the table, suggests more variability in responses. This could indicate that gang-related violence is not as pervasive in all communities or that its impact on school attendance is perceived as less severe

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compared to other forms of insecurity. Nonetheless, it remains a concern for a significant portion of respondents.

The lack of security measures around schools was also identified as a major concern, with 42.9% strongly agreeing and 35.2% agreeing. However, 19.8% strongly disagreed, and no respondents disagreed, leading to a mean score of 3.03. This reflects widespread recognition of the need for improved security infrastructure in schools, such as fencing, surveillance systems, and the presence of security personnel, to alleviate parental fears and ensure a safer learning environment.

The aggregate mean score of 2.99 indicates a general agreement on the role of insecurity in hindering school attendance in Oyo State. Key concerns such as fear of kidnappings, armed conflicts, and banditry dominate the responses, reflecting the heightened security challenges faced by communities. Lower agreement on gang-related violence highlights the variability in its prevalence across different areas.

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4.2.3 How does insecurity manifesting in incidents like school attacks reshape the landscape of educational access, and what deeper scars does it leave on children's willingness and ability to attend school?

Table 4.4: **Impact of Insecurity on Access to Education**

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
Incidents of school attacks have led to a decline in children's attendance.	40 (44.0 %)	36 (39.6 %)	7 (7.7 %)	8 (8.8 %)	3.19
Schools in conflict-prone areas are more likely to close down, affecting children's education.	25 (27.5 %)	--	59 (64.8 %)	7 (7.7 %)	3.20
Insecurity has caused teachers to leave schools, leading to poor education quality.	33 (36.3 %)	53 (58.2 %)	--	5 (5.5 %)	3.31
Children are often scared of going to school because of security risks.	28 (30.8 %)	39 (42.9 %)	--	24 (26.4 %)	3.04
Insecurity has worsened access to education for girls in particular.	55 (60.4 %)	36 (39.6 %)	--	--	3.60
Aggregate mean					3.27

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork.2025

Table 4.4 examines the impact of insecurity on access to education, particularly focusing on specific incidents such as school attacks and their consequences on children's attendance. With an aggregate mean score of 3.27, the data indicates a strong consensus that insecurity significantly hinders access to education. Below is a detailed analysis of

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each statement. Responses to the first statement revealed that a majority of respondents (44.0% strongly agree, 39.6% agree) believe that incidents of school attacks have led to a decline in children's attendance. Only 7.7% disagree, and 8.8% strongly disagree. The mean score of 3.19 reflects a high level of agreement, suggesting that school attacks directly disrupt attendance, instilling fear in students and their families. This finding highlights the urgent need to improve security measures and restore confidence in the safety of educational environments.

Majority of the respondents also agreed that schools in conflict-prone areas are more likely to close down, thereby affecting children's education, with 27.5% strongly agreeing and 64.8% agreeing. Only 7.7% strongly disagreed, and no respondents disagreed. The mean score of 3.20 indicates widespread recognition of this issue. The closures, often due to direct attacks or fears of violence, interrupt academic calendars and exacerbate educational disparities, particularly in rural or high-risk regions.

The belief that insecurity causes teachers to leave schools, leading to a decline in education quality, garnered strong agreement, with 36.3% strongly agreeing and 58.2% agreeing. Only 5.5% strongly disagreed, and no respondents disagreed, resulting in a mean score of 3.31. This response highlights how insecurity not only disrupts attendance but also diminishes the capacity of schools to deliver quality education, as qualified teachers migrate to safer areas or leave the profession entirely.

Regarding the statement that children are often scared of going to school because of security risks, 30.8% strongly agreed, and 42.9% agreed. Meanwhile, 26.4% strongly disagreed, and no respondents disagreed. The mean score of 3.04, while slightly lower, still

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indicates a majority consensus. This fear, compounded by reports of kidnappings, attacks, or community violence, significantly impairs school attendance and learning continuity.

The statement that insecurity has worsened access to education for girls in particular received the highest level of agreement, with 60.4% strongly agreeing and 39.6% agreeing. No respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, leading to the highest mean score of 3.60 in the table. This finding emphasizes the vulnerability of girls in insecure regions, where cultural norms and security threats, such as abductions or gender-based violence, further restrict their educational opportunities.

The aggregate mean score of 3.27 underscores the significant and multifaceted impact of insecurity on education in Oyo State. Key challenges include school attacks leading to reduced attendance, closures of schools in conflict-prone areas, teacher attrition, and heightened fear among children. The disproportionate impact on girls further highlights the intersectionality of insecurity and gender inequality in education.

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4.2.4: What are the strategies that could be adopted to improve child security for students in Ibarapa region of Oyo State.

Table 4.5: **Strategies to Improve Child Security for Students in Oyo State.**

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
Increased security personnel at schools would help reduce the fear of attacks.	46 (50.5 %)	41 (45.1 %)	--	4 (4.4 %)	3.46
Collaboration between local communities and law enforcement is essential to improve school security.	48 (52.7 %)	36 (39.6 %)	--	7 (7.7 %)	3.45
Government policies focused on enhancing school safety should be prioritized.	52 (57.1 %)	39 (42.9 %)	--	-	3.57
Providing security training to school staff would improve overall student safety.	40 (44.0 %)	36 (39.6 %)	7 (7.7 %)	8 (8.8 %)	3.19
Financial support for families affected by violence would help more children return to school.	29 (31.9%)	45 (49.5%)	11 (12.1%)	6 (6.6%)	3.07
Aggregate Mean					3.35

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2025

Table 4.5 explores strategies to improve child security in schools across Oyo State. With an aggregate mean score of 3.35, the data reveals a general consensus on the importance of these strategies, emphasizing a collective need for security enhancements. The statement that increased security personnel at schools would help reduce the fear of attacks received overwhelming support, with 50.5% strongly agreeing and 45.1% agreeing. Only 4.4% strongly disagreed, and no respondents disagreed, resulting in a high mean score of 3.46.

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This reflects the widespread belief that the physical presence of security personnel can act as a deterrent to attacks and instil confidence among students, parents, and staff.

Collaboration between local communities and law enforcement was also highly rated, with 52.7% strongly agreeing and 39.6% agreeing. Only 7.7% strongly disagreed, leading to a mean score of 3.45. This highlights the importance of community-driven security initiatives, such as neighbourhood watch programs and partnerships with law enforcement, to enhance school safety and mitigate threats.

The statement advocating for government policies focused on enhancing school safety to be prioritized garnered the strongest consensus, with 57.1% strongly agreeing and 42.9% agreeing. No respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, resulting in the highest mean score of 3.57. This underscores the critical role of government in formulating and implementing policies that address school security, such as infrastructure improvements, funding, and the enforcement of safety protocols.

The provision of security training for school staff was supported by 44.0% of respondents who strongly agreed and 39.6% who agreed. However, 7.7% disagreed, and 8.8% strongly disagreed, leading to a mean score of 3.19. While there is general agreement, the lower consensus suggests that some respondents may perceive training as less effective compared to other strategies, or they may lack confidence in the capacity of staff to address complex security threats.

The statement that financial support for families affected by violence would help more children return to school received 31.9% strong agreement and 49.5% agreement, while 12.1% disagreed, and 6.6% strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.07, the lowest in the

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table, indicates that while financial support is viewed positively, it may be seen as a complementary measure rather than a direct solution to security concerns. The variability in responses may also reflect differing perceptions of how effectively financial aid could address systemic issues.

The aggregate mean score of 3.35 reflects a strong consensus on the need for multi-faceted strategies to improve child security in schools. The highest-rated measures, such as prioritizing government policies and deploying security personnel, point to the importance of structural and institutional interventions. Meanwhile, community collaboration and training for staff emphasize grassroots and capacity-building approaches. Financial support for affected families, though rated lower, remains an important aspect of ensuring long-term educational access for vulnerable children.

4.2.2.1Thematic Analysis of Interview Responses

In order to obtain in-depth view of the issues surrounding the subject of this research and triangulate the collected quantitative data, the researcher also conducted a series of interview with information gatekeepers across the targeted local government areas such as Kajola, Olorunsogo, Ogo Oluwa, Oorelope, Iwajowa, Ibarapa Central, Ibarapa East, Ibarapa North, Oyo East, and Itesiwaju local government areas.

Theme 1: Assessment of the current situation of out-of-school children in Oyo State

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The overall assessment among the respondents on the current situation of out-of-school children in Oyo State a state of helplessness in which people are aware that the problem exists but they are doing little to improve the situation. As pointed out by one of the respondents.

> "The situation is alarming. In many communities, you find children roaming around during school hours. Some are following their parents to the farm, while others are simply idle because their families can't afford education or are scared of the risks involved in sending them to school."

In the rural areas, especially in places where there are conflicts, people are used to seeing to children growing up without formal education. One of the respondents indicate that, education is gradually losing its appeal among rural dwellers in Oyo State

> "Over the past decade, there has been a steady decline in school attendance, particularly in rural areas. Factors like increased poverty, security concerns, and lack of functional schools in remote areas have all contributed to this trend."

Many of the respondents have seen children dropping out of school or not enrolled in school when they reach the school age. The most striking observation is that majority of the respondents are getting used to seeing children not enrolled in school or dropping out of school. Even those who are in school often play truants due to being sent on errands by their parents. As observed by one of the respondents:

> "The issue is severe. In my community, it is common to see children not attending school. It is a mix of poverty and fear of insecurity that keeps them away." Interviewee 1.

Others also responded along the same line.

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> Interviewee 2: "Over the past ten years, I have noticed more children dropping out of school, especially in rural areas. The rise in insecurity and economic hardship has been the main driver."
>
> Interviewee 4: "Insecurity is pushing children out of school, but poverty and lack of school facilities also play a huge role."
>
> Interviewee 5: "The number of out-of-school children has increased. Parents are afraid to send their kids to schools in unsafe regions, and some schools have even closed due to violence."

Theme Two: Sources of Insecurity

Many of the interviewee do not consider the rate of out-of-school children alarming but the seemed unsurprised about the situation as the pointed out various security issues that have kept children out of school in the state. As succinctly put by one of the interviewees, sundry security issues are affecting rural areas in Oyo State:

> "Kidnappings and school attacks have become common in some areas, particularly Oke-Ogun. Armed robberies and clashes between local people and Fulani cattle herders who damage farms and attack farmers also create an unsafe environment, making parents hesitant to send their children to school."

Other respondents have also identified specific security issues;

> "Insecurity in Oyo State ranges from kidnappings to armed robberies. - Interviewee 6.
>
> "Certain areas, like the remote rural villages in Ibarapa and Oke-Ogun, face more insecurity because they lack police presence. Criminals target these areas more frequently." - Interviewee 8

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Another respondent added:

> "Yes, rural and border communities seem to be the most affected. These areas often lack security infrastructure, and criminal groups take advantage of the lack of oversight in these regions."

> "Conflicts between communities have led to heightened insecurity. Schools are sometimes caught in the crossfire, which discourages attendance."- Interviewee 10

The take-away from the responses is that certain rural areas in Oyo State have become the hotbed of violent activities with people no longer safe from the rampage of criminal element who terrorise communities and disrupt routine activities. Indeed, the threat of insecurity comes from both internal and external sources. Internally, some rural areas in Oyo State have been destabilised by boundary dispute, chieftaincy disputes and other conflicts that have led to prolonged violence.

Theme Three: Impact of Insecurity on Access to Education

All the people interviewed were unanimous in their assertion that insecurity has affected school enrolment in their areas. While the level of impact varies, majority of the respondents have seen some disruptions in school programmes due to insecurity. Indeed, the responses indicates that insecurity has significantly contributed to the rising number of out-of-school children in Oyo State, as evidenced by various personal accounts and studies. The pervasive fear of kidnapping and attacks has led many parents to withdraw their children from educational institutions. For instance, one respondent recounted:

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> "I know of a family in a neighbouring village whose child was abducted on their way to school. After that, none of their children returned to school out of fear, and the family moved to another area."

Another respondent added:

> "Parents are understandably afraid for their children's safety. After hearing about incidents of school kidnappings, many choose to keep their children at home, especially in areas where there's no police presence."

Such traumatic events not only disrupt the immediate learning process but also instil long-lasting fear, making both parents and children apprehensive about returning to school.

The closure of schools due to security threats further exacerbates this issue. When educational institutions shut down in response to insecurity, the interruption in the learning process can lead to a decline in students' interest and motivation to continue their education. This sentiment was echoed by an individual who observed that some children lose interest in returning to school after such disruptions. As stated by the respondents:

"When schools close due to insecurity, it disrupts learning. Some children lose interest in returning altogether."

The safety concerns extend to educators as well. Reports indicate that teachers have abandoned their posts in certain areas due to fears for their personal safety. One of the respondents declared that: " teachers have left schools in my area because of fear for their safety. The quality of education has dropped significantly as a result " This exodus results in a diminished quality of education, as the remaining staff are often insufficient to maintain educational standards. A community member highlighted this issue, noting a significant drop in educational quality following the departure of numerous teachers. This was corroborated by another respondent who submitted that: "The lack of teachers due to

insecurity means children are often left unsupervised in classrooms, which discourages learning."

Gender-specific vulnerabilities also play a crucial role. This was made clear by one of the respondents who said: "Girls are often targeted for violence, which makes their families extra cautious about letting them walk to school, especially in isolated areas." Another respondent added that: "Girls are particularly vulnerable. Parents are more protective of their daughters and prefer to keep them at home rather than risk sending them to unsafe schools.". Girls are particularly at risk, with families often opting to keep them at home rather than expose them to potential dangers en-route to or within schools. One interviewee emphasized that parents are more protective of their daughters, choosing to keep them at home to ensure their safety.

The psychological impact on children is profound. The constant threat of violence has instilled deep anxiety among students, with some exhibiting severe distress at the prospect of attending school. An account from a community member described children crying and begging their parents not to send them to school due to fear. "Insecurity has made children in my community anxious about attending school. Some cry every morning, begging their parents not to send them."

In response to these challenges, some parents have sought alternative educational arrangements. Informal homeschooling groups have emerged as temporary solutions to ensure that children continue learning amidst the prevailing insecurity. According one response: "Parents in our community have created informal homeschooling groups as a temporary solution to keep their children learning amid the insecurity". This initiative

reflects the community's resilience and commitment to education, even in the face of adversity.

Theme Four: Strategies to Improve Child Security

The interview conducted also revealed highly relevant insights into the strategies that can be adopted to improve child security in Oyo State. The responses revealed that, boosting child security in schools, particularly in regions like Oyo State, requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both immediate threats and underlying vulnerabilities. Insights from community members, coupled with established safety frameworks, suggest several strategies.

Deployment of Security Personnel: Assigning trained security staff to schools can deter potential threats and provide rapid response during emergencies. This measure can bolster parents' confidence in the safety of educational institutions. As one respondent submitted: "Hiring more security personnel for schools is essential. It would help parents feel more confident about sending their children to school". Other respondents added that: "Collaboration between communities and law enforcement is key. If there's trust and better communication, it would make schools safer."

Infrastructure Enhancements: Investing in physical security measures, such as sturdy fencing, controlled entry points, and surveillance systems, can significantly reduce unauthorized access and monitor school premises effectively. In one of the responses, it was recorded that: "The government needs to implement strict policies to improve security in schools and provide funding for security infrastructure like fences and cameras."

Community and Law Enforcement Collaboration: Building Trust and Communication: Establishing strong relationships between schools, local communities, and law enforcement agencies fosters a collaborative environment where information about potential threats can be shared promptly, and coordinated responses can be implemented.

Policy Implementation and Government Support: Adherence to Safe School Standards: Implementing frameworks like the Minimum Standards for Safe Schools ensures a consistent approach to safety across educational institutions. Government commitment to these standards is crucial for their success.

Financial Assistance: one of the respondents properly articulated the responses on the need for financial incentives when they say that: "Financial aid to families impacted by violence would allow more children to return to school, especially those who dropped out due to economic hardship." Majority of the respondents indicated that providing financial aid to families affected by violence can alleviate economic burdens, enabling children to return to school and continue their education without undue hardship.

Emergency Response Training: Equipping school staff with the skills to handle security incidents through regular drills and training sessions can enhance their preparedness and ensure a swift, effective response during emergencies. This was reflected in one of the responses which clearly stated that: "Providing security training for school staff would help them know what to do in emergencies and make schools feel safer." Another respondent added that: "Schools should have alarm systems or direct lines to law enforcement in case of emergencies."

Community-Led Initiatives: Formation of Vigilante Groups: In areas where formal security presence is limited, community-organized vigilante groups can offer interim protection for schools. This is evidenced in the submission of a respondent that: "Encouraging the community to form vigilante groups to protect schools might be a short-term solution to insecurity in rural areas." However, it's essential to ensure these groups operate within legal frameworks and receive proper oversight.

Technological Integration: Alarm and Communication Systems: Installing alarm systems and establishing direct communication lines with law enforcement can expedite responses during critical situations, thereby enhancing overall school safety.

Parental and Community Engagement: Inclusive Decision-Making: Involving parents in discussions and decisions regarding school security policies ensures that measures align with community needs and expectations, fostering a collective responsibility for child safety. As opined by one of the respondents: "Parents should be engaged in decision-making on school security, as they are the most invested in their children's safety."

Transportation Solutions: Providing reliable transportation can minimize students' exposure to unsafe areas, reducing the risk of incidents during commutes and encouraging consistent school attendance. Parents decried situation in which students trek to schools, sometimes through isolated bush paths. In the response of one of the respondents, it was stated that: "Expanding school bus programs to reduce long walks through unsafe areas could help more children attend school regularly."

Strategic School Placement: Respondents believe that siting schools in isolated may be good for students' concentration but it is bad for security. A respondents submitted that:

"The government should prioritize building schools in safer locations and ensure they are equipped with basic security measures like gates and guards." Prioritizing the construction of schools in secure areas and ensuring they are equipped with essential security features can create safer learning environments for children.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The study was conducted to determine the connection between child insecurity and the matter of out-of-school children in Oyo state. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analysed in line with the objective of the study. The findings of the study are discussed in this section.

There is a rising trend of out-of-school children in Oyo State. Both the qualitative and quantitative data attest to this with the interview responses supporting the empirical findings. Recent studies have highlighted a concerning increase in the number of out-of-school children in Oyo State, Nigeria. A survey by the National Population Commission (NPC) revealed that 12% of school-age children in the state are not attending school. This statistic underscores the challenges faced in ensuring universal basic education in the region[1].

There is a rising trend of out-of-school children in Oyo State. Both the qualitative and quantitative data attest to this with the interview responses supporting the empirical findings. This finding also aligns with what has been reported in various studies and government studies in recent times. In apparent acknowledgement of the problem, the Oyo State Government has implemented initiatives aimed at reintegrating out-of-school children. Notably, the reinstatement of free education policies has led to the return of

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approximately 43,000 children to classrooms. This effort demonstrates the government's commitment to addressing educational disparities and improving access to education[2].

It was also reported that the Oyo State Government has expressed its readiness to take advantage of the World Bank sponsored programme; Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) to educate over 170,000 out-of-school children, including Almajiris and hawkers in the state. This initiative aims to provide educational opportunities to marginalized groups and reduce the number of children not receiving formal education[3].

However, studies have shown that the problem is not reducing. National surveys have consistently identified a significant number of out-of-school children in Oyo State with high concentration of these children in rural areas, where access to quality education is often limited[4]. Qualitative data from interviews with stakeholders, including parents, educators, and community leaders, support these empirical findings. Many emphasize the importance of community involvement and the need for targeted interventions to address the unique challenges faced by out-of-school children. There is a consensus that while government initiatives are crucial, sustainable solutions require collaborative efforts that involve all sectors of society.

The study found that main security issues facing rural areas in Oyo State include kidnapping, banditry, school attacks, and gang-related violence. The qualitative data further revealed that boundary disputes and farmer-herder clashes are other sources of insecurity in the area. This finding also aligns with existing studies on the subject.

Recent studies have highlighted a range of security challenges affecting rural areas in Oyo State, Nigeria. Notably, kidnapping, banditry, school attacks, and gang-related violence

have been identified as prevalent threats. For instance, research focusing on the Ibarapa community within Oyo State has documented a significant rise in kidnapping incidents, attributing this surge to factors such as inadequate security infrastructure and the proliferation of small arms[5].

In addition to these issues, qualitative data has shed light on other sources of insecurity, including boundary disputes and farmer-herder clashes. The latter, in particular, has been a longstanding concern in the region. Studies have shown that conflicts between pastoralists and farmers often arise from competition over land and water resources, leading to violent confrontations and contributing to the overall insecurity in rural communities[6].

The impact of these security challenges on the socio-economic development of Oyo State is profound. Insecurity has been linked to disruptions in agricultural activities, displacement of populations, and a general decline in economic productivity. A comprehensive study on the subject concluded that the pervasive insecurity in the state has significantly hindered socio-economic progress, emphasizing the need for effective countermeasures to address these challenges[7].

Community responses to these security threats have varied. Some rural communities have developed counter-banditry strategies to protect themselves. These strategies include forming local vigilante groups and enhancing community surveillance. However, the effectiveness of these measures is often limited by resource constraints and the need for better coordination with formal security agencies[8].

In summary, the security landscape in rural Oyo State is characterized by a complex interplay of various threats, including kidnapping, banditry, farmer-herder conflicts, and boundary disputes. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that combines community initiatives with robust support from governmental and non-governmental organisations.

It was also found that the majority of the respondents agree that insecurity is a major factor driving the rise of out-of-school children in Oyo state with poverty as an underlying factor. Recent studies and stakeholder analyses have identified insecurity and poverty as primary drivers behind the increasing number of out-of-school children in Oyo State, Nigeria. Insecurity manifests through various forms, including kidnapping, banditry, school attacks, and gang-related violence, which create an environment of fear and instability. This atmosphere discourages parents from sending their children to school, particularly in rural areas where these threats are more pronounced. For instance, the farmer-herder crisis in regions like Oke-Ogun and Ibarapa has directly resulted in over 800 schoolchildren being denied access to basic education[9].

Poverty serves as an underlying factor exacerbating this issue. Economic hardships compel many families to prioritize immediate survival over education, leading children to engage in labour or street activities to support household incomes. The high cost of living and inflation have further strained family resources, making education less accessible. A recent report highlighted that over 60% of Nigerians live in poverty, with many spending more than 63% of their income on food, leaving little for educational expenses[10].

Stakeholders emphasize that addressing the out-of-school children crisis requires a multifaceted approach. This includes strengthening security measures to create safe

learning environments, implementing poverty alleviation programs to reduce the economic burden on families, and fostering community engagement to underscore the importance of education. By tackling both insecurity and poverty, it is possible to mitigate the factors driving children away from schools in Oyo State[11].

The strategies that were suggested by the respondents as a way to curb insecurity and reduce the rate of out-of-school children in the state include, hiring more security personnel for the rural areas, especially in schools. Other strategies include partnering with local security operators, providing financial incentives and security awareness training for teachers and students. In Oyo State, Nigeria, the escalating insecurity has significantly contributed to the increasing number of out-of-school children, particularly in rural areas. Empirical studies have identified kidnapping, banditry, school attacks, and gang-related violence as prevalent threats that create an environment of fear, discouraging parents from sending their children to school. For instance, a study focusing on the Ibarapa community documented a significant rise in kidnapping incidents, attributing this surge to inadequate security infrastructure and the proliferation of small arms[12].

Over the past decade, efforts have been made at both state and federal levels to address the issue of school absenteeism among students in Nigeria, particularly in Oyo State. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) program, launched in 1999, aims to deliver free and compulsory primary education to all children in Nigeria. However, the program's effectiveness is hindered by persistent challenges in execution, financial distribution, and oversight. A crucial aspect of understanding the challenges faced by out-of-school children, especially in rural areas, in accessing formal education is to analyse the impact of educational facilities and accessibility on their demographic. Rural communities

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sometimes encounter a substantial lack of educational institutions, sufficient school infrastructure, qualified educators, and essential resources such as drinkable water and sanitation facilities. The deficiency of adequate infrastructure poses significant challenges for kids in these areas, impeding their access to excellent education and resulting in a higher rate of youngsters not participating in formal schooling[13].

Additionally, boundary disputes and farmer-herder clashes have been identified as significant sources of insecurity. These conflicts often lead to violent confrontations, further destabilizing rural communities and disrupting educational activities. A study highlighted that in regions like Oke-Ogun and Ibarapa, over 800 schoolchildren have been denied access to basic education due to the farmer-herder crisis[14].

To address these challenges, respondents have suggested several strategies. One key recommendation is the deployment of additional security personnel to rural areas, especially around schools, to create a safer environment conducive to learning. Collaborating with local security entities, such as vigilante groups, can also enhance community-based surveillance and response mechanisms. Providing financial incentives, like scholarships and conditional cash transfers, may encourage families to prioritize education over economic activities. Furthermore, conducting security awareness training for teachers and students can empower them to respond effectively to potential threats[15,16].

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Endnotes

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Chapter Five
Conclusion

This section concludes the study. It presents the summary of the finding and the conclusion reached therefrom. It also provides a set of recommendations and highlights the contribution of the study to existing body of knowledge.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The findings of this study can be summarised as follows:

There is a rising trend of out-of-school children in Oyo State. Both the qualitative and quantitative data attest to this with the interview responses supporting the empirical findings.

The study found that main security issues facing rural areas in Oyo State include kidnapping, banditry, school attacks, and gang-related violence. The qualitative data further revealed that boundary disputes and farmer-herder clashes are other sources of insecurity in the area.

Majority of the respondents agree that insecurity is a major factor driving the rise of out-of-school children in Oyo state with poverty as an underlying factor.

The strategies that were suggested by the respondents as a way to curb insecurity and reduce the rate of out-of-school children in the state include, hiring more security personnel for the rural areas, especially in schools. Other strategies include partnering with local security operators, providing financial incentives and security awareness training for teachers and students.

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5.2 Conclusion

This study has illuminated the escalating issue of out-of-school children in Oyo State, Nigeria, identifying insecurity and poverty as primary contributing factors. Empirical data indicates that rural areas are particularly affected by kidnapping, banditry, school attacks, and gang-related violence, creating environments that deter parents from sending their children to school. Additionally, boundary disputes and farmer-herder clashes exacerbate the instability, further disrupting educational activities. The qualitative insights gathered align with these findings, underscoring the pervasive impact of insecurity on education in the region.

The pervasive insecurity in Oyo State has led to a significant number of children being out of school. This underscores the urgent need for comprehensive interventions to address both the security challenges and the socioeconomic factors contributing to this crisis. Insecurity not only deters school attendance but also adversely affects the mental health of students. This psychological distress further hampers students' ability to engage effectively in their education.

Addressing the issue of out-of-school children in Oyo State, therefore, requires a multifaceted approach. Stakeholders have emphasized the need for increased government commitment, community involvement, and educational policies that balance formal schooling with local traditions. Additionally, integrating media approaches has been suggested as a strategy to tackle the menace of out-of-school children, especially in rural areas.

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5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendation are suggested in line with the findings of the study;

1. Enhance Security Measures in Rural Schools: The government should prioritize the deployment of additional security personnel to rural areas, focusing on safeguarding educational institutions. Implementing comprehensive security protocols can create a safer learning environment, encouraging school attendance.
2. Foster Partnerships with Local Security Entities: Collaborating with local vigilante groups and community-based security organizations can strengthen surveillance and response mechanisms, leveraging local knowledge to address security challenges effectively.
3. Provide Financial Support to Families: Introducing financial incentives such as scholarships, conditional cash transfers, and school feeding programs can alleviate the economic burdens that contribute to children dropping out of school. These measures can make education more accessible to impoverished families.
4. Implement Security Awareness Programs: Conducting regular security training sessions for teachers and students can enhance preparedness and resilience against potential threats, fostering a culture of safety within schools.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This study has made certain contributions to the existing body of knowledge which can be outlined from the perspective of empirical, conceptual, and theoretical contributions. In the context of conceptual contribution, this study contributes to the understanding of the

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complex interplay between insecurity and educational attainment in rural settings. By identifying specific security threats and their direct impact on school attendance, the research provides a nuanced perspective on the barriers to education in conflict-prone areas.

Furthermore, the study has made some theoretical contribution. The findings support and extend existing theories on the socio-economic determinants of education, highlighting how security concerns intersect with poverty to influence educational outcomes. This underscores the need for integrated theoretical frameworks that consider both economic and security dimensions in educational research.

The study also made empirical contributions through the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, This study offers empirical evidence of the factors contributing to the rise of out-of-school children in Oyo State. The alignment between interview responses and statistical data strengthens the validity of the conclusions drawn and provides a robust foundation for policy recommendations.

5.5 Suggested Areas for Further Studies

Based on the scope of this study, the following areas are considered as needing further investigation to comprehensively address the issue of out-of-school children in Oyo State:

1. Impact of media integration on school enrolment to tackle the menace of out-of-school children in rural areas of Oyo State.
2. Effective policy making as a panacea to the issue of out-of-school children in Oyo State.
3. Socio-economic factors influencing school dropout rates in Oyo State.

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Appendix I

Questionnaire

Lead City University Ibadan

Faculty of Management and Social Sciences

Questionnaire on Influence of Insecurity on Out-of-School Children in Oyo State

Section A: Demographic Information

i. Gender: a. Male b. Female

ii. Age Distribution: 26-40 years [ ], 41-55 years [ ], 56-70 years [ ], Above 70 years [ ],

iii. Academic Qualification: No formal education [ ], Only primary education [ ], Only secondary education [ ], Tertiary education [ ],

Section B: Prevalence of Out-of-School Children

For each of the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement:

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	There has been a significant increase in the number of out-of-school children in Oyo State over the last decade.				
2.	2. Most children in my community have consistent access to education.				
3.	The government has taken measures to reduce the number of out-of-school children.				

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4.	Poverty is a major factor contributing to children dropping out of school in Oyo State.				
5.	The issue of out-of-school children is more prevalent in rural areas of Oyo State than urban areas.				

Section C: Sources of Insecurity Affecting School Attendance

For each of the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement:

	Statement	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
6.	Fear of kidnappings and school attacks prevents children from attending school.				
7.	. Armed conflicts between local groups or communities negatively affect school attendance.				
8.	Banditry and violence are key sources of insecurity preventing children from attending school.				
9.	. Insecurity due to gang-related violence in my community prevents children from going to school.				
10	Lack of security measures around schools is a concern for parents and children.				

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Section D: Impact of Insecurity on Access to Education

For each of the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement:

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
11	Incidents of school attacks have led to a decline in children's attendance.				
12	Schools in conflict-prone areas are more likely to close down, affecting children's education.				
13	Insecurity has caused teachers to leave schools, leading to poor education quality.				
14	Children are often scared of going to school because of security risks.				
15	Insecurity has worsened access to education for girls in particular.				

Section E: Strategies to Improve Child Security for Students

For each of the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement:

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16	Increased security personnel at schools would help reduce the fear of attacks.					
17	Collaboration between local communities and law enforcement is essential to improve school security.					

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18	Government policies focused on enhancing school safety should be prioritized.					
19	Providing security training to school staff would improve overall student safety.					
20	Financial support for families affected by violence would help more children return to school.					

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Appendix II

Interview Guide

Introduction of the Researcher:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. I am conducting a study on the influence of insecurity on out-of-school children in Oyo State. Your insights will help us understand the challenges and solutions in addressing this issue. The interview will take approximately [duration]. Everything you share will be confidential and used for academic purposes only.

Purpose of the Study:

The goal of this interview is to gather qualitative insights into the prevalence of out-of-school children, the role insecurity plays in their education, and potential strategies for improvement.

Prevalence of Out-of-School Children

How would you describe the current situation of out-of-school children in Oyo State?

Have you noticed any trends in the number of children attending school in the past decade? What factors do you think have influenced these trends?

In your opinion, what are the major reasons children in your community are not attending school regularly?

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Sources of Insecurity

Can you describe the types of insecurity or violence that you believe are contributing to children being out of school in Oyo State?

How do events like kidnappings, school attacks, or conflicts in the area affect parents' decisions to send their children to school?

Are there specific regions in Oyo State that are more affected by insecurity than others? Can you explain why?

How do economic challenges, like poverty or unemployment, play a role in exacerbating insecurity and keeping children out of school?

Impact of Insecurity on Access to Education

Can you share any personal experiences or stories where insecurity directly impacted a child's ability to attend school?

How do school closures, teacher absenteeism, and fear of attacks affect children's education in your community?

Are there particular groups (e.g., girls, children from specific communities) that you feel are more vulnerable to the effects of insecurity on education? Why?

How have parents and teachers responded to these threats? What coping mechanisms have families developed?

Strategies to Improve Child Security

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In your opinion, what steps can be taken to improve the security situation for students in Oyo State?

What role do you think local communities, school authorities, and law enforcement agencies can play in improving the safety of children at school?

How effective do you think current government policies are in addressing the safety concerns that keep children out of school?

What specific resources or interventions do you think would help reduce the number of out-of-school children in Oyo State?

Can you suggest any ways that schools can be better protected from insecurity, both within and outside the school environment?

Conclusion

Is there anything else you would like to add regarding the issue of out-of-school children and the influence of insecurity?

Do you have any additional recommendations or suggestions on how to tackle this problem moving forward.

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Bio-data

A. Personal Data

Full Name:	Tobi Ismail AKINYELE
Address:	Plot 3, Salami Layout, Oluyole Estate, Ibadan. Oyo State
E-mail:	tobiakinyele1@gmail.com
Phone No:	+2347032166986
Date of Birth:	August 17, 1993
Place of Birth:	Ibadan, Oyo State
Nationality:	Nigeria
Next of Kin:	Tolulope AKINYELE
	Plot 3, Salami Layout, Oluyole Estate, Ibadan. Oyo State

B. Educational Background

Educational Institutions Attended with Dates and Qualifications

- PhD in Peace and Conflict Studies – Lead University, Ibadan — In View
- M.A Peace and Conflicts Studies – University of Ibadan — 2021
- B.A Linguistics – University of Abuja — 2015
- WAEC – West Africa Examination Council — 2010

C. Working Experience with Dates

- CEO Westwood Travel Services — 2017-Date

D. Awards and Fellowships (if any)

None yet

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E. Membership

- Member, Society for Peace Studies and Practice (MSPSP)
- Member, Peace Education and Practice Network (PEPNET)

F. Publication (s)

Upcoming

G. Major Conferences Attended with Dates

None yet

H. Reference

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_____ _____

Signature **Date**

The University Compliance Certification

This is to certify that, this thesis written by Tobi Ismail AKINYELE with matriculation number LCU/PG/002807 in the Department of Politics and International Relations in the Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Lead City University, Ibadan is in full compliance with the approved University format and style.

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Signature **Date**

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