

STAKEHOLDERS' OPINIONS ON THE APPLICABILITY OF ARMED SCHOOL POLICY AS DETERRENCE FOR ACTIVITIES OF UNCONVENTIONAL MILITIAS IN NIGERIAN NORTH CENTRAL SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT: *The study finds out opinions of parents, school staffs and students, who are here referred as stakeholders, on the applicability of armed school policy as deterrence for activities of unconventional militias such as Boko Haram, in Nigerian north central schools. From the population of the stakeholders, a total sample of 1232 respondents were sampled using cluster sampling technique, for parents and students and incidental sampling technique for school staffs. The populations were represented as following: 442(35.87%) of parents; 400 (32.46%) of school staff and 390 (31.65%) of students. Data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire titled Armed School Policy Questionnaire (ASPQ). ASPQ was validated and has reliability co-efficient of 0.72. Data were analyzed using percentages and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Findings revealed that 91.1% of parents, 77.7% of school staff and 100% of students wanted the schools in North-Central Nigeria to be guided by armed security personnel. Among these, 76.5% wanted the armed personnel to be permanently present in the schools; 18.6% and 4.1% wanted them occasionally and only on invitation, respectively. Besides, the stakeholders believed that application of armed school policy in the zone would provide security and deter crimes. Only 9.7% of parents and 26% of school staff believed presence of armed personnel would amount to security threat. It was therefore concluded that application of armed school policy would secure life and property in schools and would be appreciated by education stakeholders in North-Central Nigeria.*

KEYWORDS: Militia, pattern, personnel, unconventional, armed personnel

INTRODUCTION

The dead hostage-takers are in heaven and the killed school children are in hell.

- Shamil Basayev, a Chechen Warlord and Leader of Riyadh al-Salihin Insurgency

Militaries and military activities in modern and traditional societies can be categorized as either conventional or unconventional. Conventional militaries are official agents of security in societies. They are legally created, officially trained, named and armed to operate and secure life and properties in accordance to the laws of their societies. In most cases, the activities of conventional militaries are organized and lunched following national and international *rules of*

military engagements (Greene, 2007). On the other hand, unconventional militaries are illegal armed groups of people who operate as insurgents, terrorists and as criminal groups to unleash fatal military actions to achieve their ideological, political and vengeful interests. Some unconventional military operate to acquire religious honour, glory, domination and to propagate their religious beliefs (Greene, 2007). The concept of *unconventional military* is synonymous to the concept of *militia* in this text.

When unconventional militias fight with the motive of politics, they are classified as rebels and when they are indigenes and/or ethically linked to the country they attack, they are called insurgents. They are classified as terrorists when they use random violence that is accompanied with widespread and indiscriminate slaughter and massacre of people. Generally, they are terrorists if they use violence to instill fear or terror in society and intimidate government, nationally and internationally- across borders. Armed groups in these categories are unconventional because their modes of operation are contrary to standard national and international rules of regular warfare.

Many militias are capable of organized and fatal violence. In most nations of the world, they have carried out and/or claimed responsibilities for series of organized and sometimes random kidnapping, massacre, abduction, bombing, most especially, suicide bombing. In some cases, they cause and sustain wars (Norwitz, 2009). Their modes of operation can be very strategic but because of being illegal they tend to operate discretely. This makes them employ the hit-and-run raid, ambush warfare, and sometimes martyrdom as strategies of their warfare. Many known unconventional militias were recruited and mobilized or motivated by tribal, clannish, religious, economic or political woes (Barkun, 1994). They are known to target non-combatant and vulnerable civilians such as women, children, and common citizens in an unpredictable manner to rouse people's anger against absence of government intelligence and counter confrontations that would have curbed their insurgencies or violence (Norwitz, 2009). In some cases unconventional militias use traditionally protected places such as mosques, churches, military facilities, schools, hospitals and refugee camps to hide or launch their expressive mass destruction (Lott, 2010).

From history to present day, unconventional militias have ravaged nations and subject socio-political policies and practices to change in some nations, and nonoperational in some others. In history, unconventional militias such as Huks of Philippine (1940s – 1950s), Mau Mau of Kenya (1950s), Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (1970s) and Maitatsine of Nigeria (1970s) fought government and civilians to achieve colonial and religious motives. In the present day, examples such as Al-Qaeda, Taliban, Janjaweed, Muslim Brotherhood, Al-shabaab, and Boko Haram are having increasing military power with which they press their interest around the world. For example, Al-Qaeda, Taliban, Muslim Brotherhood and Al-shabaab, have been ravaging Middle East nations and some time, they have been linked to terrorists' actions in and across borders of Asia, Middle East and in African nations such as Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, Chad and Nigeria.

In Nigeria, for example, Boko Haram has been active since 2002 and very dangerous since 7th September 2010 when it aided prison break at a Bauchi Prison facility. Boko Haram, known as *the Congregation of the People of Tradition for Proselytism and Jihad (Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad)* was established by Mohameed Yusuf in 2002 to promote

Islamic Jihad (i.e *Salafist Jihadism*) in Northern Nigeria (Murtada, 2012). Since inception, Boko Haram has been operating in Northern Nigeria, Northern Cameroon and Southern Chad. International security vigilance linked Boko Haram organization to bigger terrorist group such as Al-Qeada (Simcox, 2014). The activities of Boko Haram has been so fatal and threatening so much that on 13th November 2013, the United State Government designated it a terrorist group and on 22nd May 2014, the United Nation classified it as a potential international terrorist group with Al-Qeada backing (Simcox, 2014).

Like many other unconventional militias, Boko Haram was not sparing educational facilities. Boko Haram flagrantly attacked, killed school members and destroyed school facilities; perhaps, with the intention of escalating psychological breakdown in people, and insecurity and anger against government. In recent time, Boko Haram has claimed responsibility for many of violent attacks on Nigerian schools. For example, on 29th of April, 2012, Boko Haram claimed responsibility for an attack on Bayero University that resulted in the killing of 20 students – including a Professor (Aljazeera, 2012, April 29). Then on 29th September 2013, 48 students were reportedly killed by the militia at a predominantly male College of Agriculture located in Gujba, Yobe State. Some of the students were slaughtered (Falayi, 2014, October 18). Also, in February 2014, Boko Haram claimed responsibility for killing over 43 students at Federal Government College at Buni Yadi, Yobe State. The students were burnt in their dormitories or gunned down while trying to escape (Idowu, 2015, March 10). More recently, Boko Haram attacked a school at Chibok town in Bornu State and abducted over 200 female students (Akinloye 2014, May 25). This singular action attracted series of social and political comments and anger nationally and internationally. Many have claimed that Boko Haram attacks schools to herald its anti-western education military campaign (Hassan & Yalwa, 2013). No doubt, the attacks affect school activities most especially in the northern part of the country.

While violent attack on school properties may be new in Nigeria, it is not new in some foreign countries. In July 2004, for example, a group of 32 male and 2 female members of Riyadh al-Salihin Chechen separatists led by Shamil Basayev sneaked in and hide weapons and explosives in Besian Number 1 School, located in North Ossetia-Alana, Russia. Two month later, i.e. on 1st September, 2004, the separatists came back to attack the school with their hidden explosives. Now, they took 1,128 people including 777 students of the school hostage. At the end of the siege (attack), 355 people including 186 children were found dead. Basayev's reaction to the incidence is quoted at the opining of this report (Donnelley, 2009). Also, the United State of America had had its share of terror attacks on schools. Among such attacks are the Bath School disaster and the Cologne school massacre. These series of fatal attacks on schools led to the coinage of the term: *School shooting*. School shooting refers to any violent weaponry attack on school facilities and members that is carried out by an individual or by an organized group of militia.

Many foreign countries have, however, designed preventive solutions against attacks like these. It is the applicability of some of the solutions to Nigerian schools that is researched and reported in this report. For example, to make school safe in United States of America, the government came up with series of gun-related policies. Among these are: the Gun-Free School Zones Act of 1994, the Concealed Carry or Armed Classroom and the School Resources Officer Policy. Generally, these policies were created to check presence of and violence with gun and other weapons and explosives on American school facilities. Specifically, the Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA), was enacted on October 20, 1994 as an appendage of the American Schools Act of

1994 which was itself an improvement on the nation's Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). The GFSA establishes schools as gun-free zones and it prohibits possession of a gun within a school, on school property, or within a set distance of school property (Moody & Marvell, 2008).

Contrary to the Gun-Free School Zones Act, the Concealed Carry or the Armed Classroom Policy allows carriage of specified weapons and ammunitions on school properties. The South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard was the first to accent such law in an American state. Though, earlier, the Harrold Independent School District in Texas had been practicing, in principle, *armed classroom* since 2008. The accented bill which allows teachers to carry guns in school was pushed by gun-rights supporters who held the belief that arming teachers could help prevent gun or militia tragedies in schools. The law became effective on July 1, 2013. On the other hand, In America, the policy of School Resource Officer (SROs) is a law that allows presence of law and security enforcement personnel in school. The security agents are armed and are officially posted to schools to provide security and prevent crime. The officers are typically employed by a local police agency and are expected to create crime-free environment for students and staff.

However, by the stipulations of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Fire Arm Act of 1990, no person shall have in his possession or under his control any firearm except in accordance with a license granted in respect thereof by the Inspector-General of Police. In addition, the Act indicates that the licenses shall be granted or refused in accordance with principles decided upon by the National Council of Ministers and in some cases by the President of the nation (FRN, 1990). Firearm, by the Act's definition, means any lethal barreled weapon of any description from which any shot, bullet or other missile can be discharged. It includes a prohibited firearm, a personal firearm and a muzzle-loading firearm of any of the categories referred to in Parts I, II and III respectively of the Schedule of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Fire Arm Act of 1990 (FRN, 1990). By this law, it is illegal for any unauthorized person to arm himself in Nigerian schools.

However, this study investigates the opinions of education stakeholders, including parents, students and school staffs on two aspects of armed school environment policies. First are their opinions on the need to reverse prohibition on possession of personal fire arms by teachers and adult students in Nigerian schools and second, is their opinion on the need to make it a policy to allow full time presence of armed security personnel in Nigerian schools. The study sought the opinions of parents, school staffs and students on the applicability of these two policies – jointly tagged *armed school policy* in school located in North-Central Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The study is theoretically framed on *Deterrence Theory*. Deterrence theory posits that a threat of retaliation will deter offensive actions from an intending attacker or a criminal, so to say. As a security strategy, deterrence encompasses all forms of policies and actions of government that warn that any criminal attempt or confrontation from any individual, group or nation will be met with serious retaliation. Elements of deterrence include presence of law that stipulates severe punishment for disturbance of order and peace in society. It also includes deployment of armed security agents such as police, or military to strategic places to counter any possible attack from criminals or militias. Specifically, presence of armed security agents in school is a form of deterrence. It is a form of warning intending attackers that they would be met with

counter attack. Proponents of deterrence theory believe that awareness of counter attacks of such will keep offenders in check and will deter them from attacking (Macionis, 2009). Some researchers have found that increase in police presence and strength leads to decreases in crime rates (Corman & Mocan, 2000; Levitt, 1997; Marvel and Moody, 1996). However, Eck & Maguire (2000) from a meta-analysis of past researches on relationship between police strength and violent crime concluded that there was no consistent body of evidence supporting the assertion that police presence and strength is an effective method for reducing violent crime. Basically, this research did not find out effectiveness of presence of armed security agents in school in deterring violent attacks on Nigerian schools, rather the study focused on sample's opinions on the need, including the implications, for such presence.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised:

1. Will parents, school staff and students agree to presence of armed security personnel in Nigerian north central schools?
2. What pattern of presence of armed security personnel will parents, school staff and students recommend for Nigerian north central schools?
3. What do parents, school staff and students perceived as implications of armed school personnel in Nigerian education system?
4. Is there significant difference in the opinion of parents, school staff and students on the implications of armed school policy in Nigerian education system?

Research Hypothesis

Only the fourth research question was recast as a null hypothesis and presented as following:

H01: There is no significant difference in the opinion of parents, school staff and students on the implications of armed school policy in Nigerian education system

METHODOLOGY

The survey research method was used in the conduct of the study. The population for the study comprised of parents, students and school staff, which are here referred to as stakeholders. The stakeholders were drawn across levels of schools in three randomly selected Nigerian north-central states namely: Kwara State, Niger State and Kogi State. From the population, a total sample of 1232 stakeholders were selected using cluster sampling technique, for parents and students and incidental sampling technique for school staffs. The samples were distributed as following: 442(35.87%) parents, 400 (32.46%) school staff (academic and non-academics) and 390 (31.65%) students of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. The parents were accessed and sampled as they cluster at Parents Teachers Meetings of primary schools and secondary schools and at matriculation/convocation ceremonies of tertiary institutions. The students were accessed and sampled as they cluster in class/lecture rooms and the school staffs were accessed and sampled as they were available in their offices.

A researcher-designed instrument titled Armed School Policy Questionnaire (ASPQ) was used to elicit the needed data from the respondents. The ASPQ has three sections. Section A elicited respondents biographical and demographical data i.e. their status (parenthood, studentship, and being school staff), their residence (state locality) and level of education- for students. Section B elicited responses to research questions 1, 2 and 3. The Section C contains 10 items within which possible security and socio-psychological implications of Armed School Policy (ASP) were contained. Five of the implications were expressed positive implications of ASP and the other five were expressed negative implications of ASP in the reviewed literature. The response options of the items in Section C were Strongly Agree (SA), Agree, (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The scoring scale for items conveying negative implications of ASP are: SA=4, A=3, D=2 and SD=1. The scoring scale for items conveying positive implications of ASP are: SA=4, A=3, D=2 and SD=1. The instrument was validated and a reliability coefficient of 0.72 was derived for it.

Responses leading to answering research questions 1, 2 and 3 were analyzed using frequency count and percentages while responses leading to the analysis of the hypothesis was analyzed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Result

1. Will parents, school staff and students agree to presence of armed security personnel in Nigerian schools?

***RLQ:** Will you agree if asked whether armed security personnel should be allowed in Nigerian schools?

Table 1: Stakeholders' agreement/objection to presence of armed school personnel

Stakeholders	Agreements and objections			
	Agreed		Disagree	
	n	%	n	%
Parents	403	91.1	39	8.8
School Staff	311	77.7	89	22.2
Students	390	100	==	==
Total	1104	89.1	128	10.32

*RLQ= Related item in the questionnaire

As shown on Table 1, a substantial percentage of samples of stakeholders, 89.1% accumulating from 91.1% of parents, 77.7% of school staffs and 100% of students in selected North-Central states of Nigeria agreed to allowing presence of armed security personnel in school premises across levels of education. Only 10.32% of the sampled stakeholders disagreed to such presence.

2. What pattern of presence of armed security personnel will parents, school staff and students recommend for Nigerian schools?

***RLQ:** What pattern of presence of armed security personnel in Nigerian schools will you recommend?

Table 2: Stakeholders' responses to pattern of presence of armed school personnel in school

Stakeholders	Pattern of presence of armed security personnel					
	<i>Permanent</i>		<i>Occasional Patrol</i>		<i>On invitation</i>	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Parents	311	70.3	83	18.7	48	
10.8						
School Staff	292	73	104	26	4	1
Students	346	88.7	44	11.2	=	=
Total	949	76.5	231	18.6	52	4.1

*RLQ= Related item in the questionnaire

As analyzed on Table 2, out of the total sampled stakeholders, 76.5% (specifically, 70.3% of parents, 73% of school staff and 88.7% of students) believed armed security personnel should be permanently stationed on Nigerian school premises. Out of the sample, 18.6% (specifically 18.7% of parents, 26% of school staff and 11.2% of students) believed such armed security personnel should be allowed only on occasional patrol and only 4.1% (specifically, 10.8% of parents, and 1% of school staff – none of students) said they should be allowed only on invitation-as in situation of crisis.

1. What do parents, school staff and students perceived as implications of armed school policy in Nigerian education system?

*RLQ: What in your opinion would be the implications of presence of armed school personnel in Nigerian schools?

Table 3: Stakeholders' opinions on the implications of presence of armed school personnel

Implications	Stakeholders							
	Parents		School staff		Students		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
a. Increased security threat	43	9.7	104	26	41	10.5	188	15.2
b. Scary for school members	59	13.3	271	67.7	226	57.9	556	45.1
c. Accidental victims	314	71.4	400	100	384	98.4	1098	89.1
d. Learning of violence	106	23.9	111	27.7	12	3.1	229	18.5
e. Academic distraction	12	2.7	23	5.75	47	12.1	82	6.6
f. Sufficient security	407	92.1	382	95.5	381	97.6	1170	94.9
g. Deterrence advantages	375	84.8	369	92.2	349	89.4	1093	88.7
h. Reduced in-school indiscipline	391	88.4	247	61.7	204	52.3	842	68.3
i. Increased security consciousness	433	97.9	391	97.7	375	96.1	1199	97.3
j. Concentration on academics	374	84.6	102	25.5	331	84.8	787	63.8

As shown on Table 3, out of the total sample of parents, school staff and students, 97.3% believed implementing armed school policy in Nigerian North-Central schools will increase school security consciousness. Another 88.7% believed such implementation would have deterrence advantage on violent attacks in school and 94.9% were of the opinion that such policy would provide sufficient security for school members and school facilities. In addition,

68.3% of the sample agreed the policy would help school reduce indiscipline even among its students and 63.8% believed it would give school the opportunity to concentrate on academic activities.

However, 45.1% of the total sample believed presence of armed security personnel on school compound would scare school members and 89.1% said such presence could make school members accidental victims of violence in case of violent attacks on school. Yet, only 15.2% was of the opinion that presence of armed security personnel in school will be a security threat itself and just 18.5% believed the presence will expose students to learning the culture of violence.

Hypothesis Testing

H01: There is no significant difference in the opinion of parents, school staff and students on the implications of armed school policy in Nigerian education system

Table 4: Descriptive table of mean scores for an ANOVA testing of H01

Implications

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Parents	442	1.5747	.49495	.02354	1.5284	1.6209
school staff	400	2.2450	.43063	.02153	2.2027	2.2873
Students	390	3.0000	.00000	.00000	3.0000	3.0000
Total	1232	2.2435	.69986	.01994	2.2044	2.2826

The table above shows the analysis of the various mean scores of the sampled stakeholders on the issue of their perceived implications of applying armed school policy in Nigerian schools. The data on the table statistically transform into the data on the following ANOVA table.

Table 4: ANOVA analysis of mean difference

implications

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	420.922	2	210.461	1.421E3	.000
Within Groups	182.026	1229	.148		
Total	602.948	1231			

Table 5: Post-hoc Test**Multiple Comparisons**

Dependent Variable: implications

	(I)	(J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Sidak	Parents	school staff	-.67034*	.02656	.000	-.7338	-.6068
		Students	-1.42534*	.02674	.000	-1.4893	-1.3614
	school staff	Parents	.67034*	.02656	.000	.6068	.7338
		Students	-.75500*	.02739	.000	-.8205	-.6895
	Students	Parents	1.42534*	.02674	.000	1.3614	1.4893
		school staff	.75500*	.02739	.000	.6895	.8205

*. The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level.

The various data on Table 4-5 indicate that there was significant difference in the opinions of parents, school staffs and students on the positive and negative implications of applying armed school policy in Nigerian North-Central schools.

DISCUSSION

The spate of insecurity in Nigerian society requires functioning policies and practices that can secure life and properties particularly of the vulnerable victims such as children at home and in school. This study investigated the opinions of parents, school staff and students on the possibility of applying armed school policy to deter and/or resist violent attacks on schools. The findings revealed that the ideal of having armed security personnel at school premises in North-Central Nigeria would be supported by parents, staff and students in the geopolitical zone. In fact, 100% of the sampled students supported the idea and 91.1% of parents and 77.7% of school staff agreed to it. However, the agreements of these three categories of sampled respondents did significantly differ against what was earlier hypothetically assumed.

Despite the agreement of some respondents to the fact that presence of armed security personnel in school could increase accidental victims of violence among school members and also sometimes become scary to school members, substantial percentage of the respondents (76.5%) would want the armed personnel permanently stationed in schools. Only 18.6% and 4.1% of the respondents would want them occasionally and on invitation respectively. Some past researches have established the importance of permanent presence of arms and armed personnel in school preemies and some other researchers have established the consequences of such permanent presence.

For example, Lot (2010) identified presence of guns on school property as a good deterrence for crime. In a study, Lot, (2010) conducted an analysis of crime data for every country in the United States during 29 years from 1977 to 2005. The study actually measured the impacts of 11 different types of gun control laws on crime rates. Lot's study concludes that allowing citizens to carry gun for self defense steadily decrease violent crime. Lot maintains that such

policy is good because criminals are deterred by the risk of attacking an armed victim. Yet, other researchers such as David (2004), Ayres & Donohue (2003) and Ludwig, (1998) have established the fact that presence of guns or armed carrier does not necessarily deter aggravated violence such as violent attacks on school.

In whatever perspective of benefits or disadvantages of armed school policy, the studied stakeholders in North Central Nigeria would want armed personnel to be stationed in all levels of schools in the geo-political zone. This might be as a result of the cases of insecurity and wanton killings of school children currently experienced mostly in the North-East part of the country. It would be assumed that with the presence of armed personnel in schools, the violent attacks can be repelled. Also, with the presence of armed personnel, school members may be assured that the attack will not occur and thus, they can concentrate on school activities.

Definitely, effective teaching and learning activities requires a peaceful environment. No meaningful learning can occur under threats of insecurity. Dende (2009) writes that every school developer would need to think of job security and life security for staff and for students before he/she can achieve maximally in the business of school establishment. Nigerian government, being custodian of national security needs to consider series of ways of making schools safe in all parts of Nigeria. There are legal enactments that allow presence of armed personnel in Nigerian schools however, such presence are mainly on invitation and only during serious situation of threat to insecurity (Adelodun & Lawal, 2011). With the findings of this study, Nigerian government might have a rethink.

CONCLUSION

There is need for armed policies to be reviewed and adapted for security reasons in Nigerian schools. Parents, school staff and students in North-central Nigeria would appreciate a policy that will allow presence of armed personnel permanently on Nigerian schools. The thinking is that such presence could make the schools safe and free of threats. The studied populations, irrespective of being parents, school staffs or students were of the opinion that applicability of armed policy in Nigerian school will be a good deterrence for activities of unconventional militia in school located in the North-Central Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended:

1. Government should enact and apply armed school policies in the schools located in north central Nigeria as this would be appreciated by stakeholders in the region. .
2. Government should consider allowing permanent presence of security personnel in schools located in the north central Nigeria
3. However, efforts should be made to ensure that application of armed school policy will not generate further threat to life and properties in the schools..

4. Further researches should find out the implications of applying armed school policy in more geopolitical zones of Nigeria.

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