

The Role of Security Education in Promoting National Security in Nigeria: Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the pivotal role of security education in promoting sustainable national security in Nigeria, moving beyond reliance on traditional kinetic responses. It posits that security education, anchored in civic values, peacebuilding, and vigilance, is a vital, non-kinetic strategy for fostering citizen resilience and preventing threats like radicalisation, banditry, and communal violence. The research employs a qualitative, analytical design, underpinned by Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT), to review trends, challenges, and opportunities from credible secondary sources. The analysis reveals positive trends toward curriculum integration (e.g., JSS Security Education) and the professionalisation of security studies (e.g., NDA's B.Sc. in Intelligence and Security Science, NDA, 2025). However, these advances are critically undermined by major challenges: poor curriculum implementation due to untrained teachers, widespread corruption and weak governance, and the fundamental contradiction of insecurity in learning environments. The findings conclude that security education is an underutilized strategic tool whose effectiveness is hampered by systemic funding deficits and implementation failures. To address this, opportunities must be leveraged, including technology for mass outreach, Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), and integrating early-warning systems into school infrastructure. The study recommends implementing a fully funded, mandatory National Security Literacy Programme to build a proactive, security-conscious citizenry.

INTRODUCTION

National security today has evolved into a complex, multidimensional construct that goes beyond traditional military defence to include human safety, social stability and economic resilience. Globally, the increasing frequency of internal security crises has underscored the necessity for preventive, education-driven responses. For instance, in February 2025, a school shooting in Örebro, Sweden, which left ten people dead, reignited debates on community security awareness and preventive education (Odicho, 2025). According to Sector, (2017)., security education anchored in civic values, tolerance, and peacebuilding is a fundamental means of preventing radicalisation and violent extremism, complementing law enforcement. This global orientation highlights how sustainable national security is grounded not only in coercive power but also in knowledge-based citizen resilience. Hence, education systems worldwide are being reimaged to include security consciousness and civic responsibility as central components of national stability.

Across Africa, the security education nexus has become increasingly evident, especially in conflict-prone regions such as the Sahel. The International Institute for Educational Planning (2024) reported that by February 2024, over 5,000 schools were closed in Burkina Faso due to armed conflict, affecting more than 820,000 learners and 24,000 teachers (Africa, 2020). This regional crisis demonstrates how insecurity and educational collapse are mutually reinforcing. David (2025) argued that widespread youth radicalisation in West Africa is strongly linked to the absence of inclusive education and economic opportunities, making young people susceptible to extremist recruitment. These patterns confirm that a purely kinetic military strategy cannot address the root causes of insecurity; rather, investment in education that builds critical thinking, conflict-resolution skills, and civic engagement is crucial to breaking the cycle of violence and fragility across African societies.

In Nigeria, national security defined as the protection of lives, property, institutions, and economic stability remains severely challenged by insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, and socio-economic dislocation (Usman, 2022). From 2023 to 2024, thousands of Nigerians were killed or abducted in violent incidents, with many regions experiencing rising ransom payments and community displacement. The over-reliance on kinetic responses has proven insufficient to resolve the underlying drivers of insecurity such as unemployment, weak governance, and poor civic education (Berebon, 2025). Although Nigeria's basic education curriculum includes a security-education component, implementation remains inconsistent due to inadequate teacher training and low institutional capacity. Similarly, Uwaezuoke (2023) observed that security education in public secondary schools in Anambra State is still largely theoretical, with little integration into practical civic instruction. Fadiya (2022) further emphasised the critical role of parents and communities in promoting student safety and awareness, underscoring the collaborative nature of security education as a national strategy.

Therefore, security education in Nigeria offers a sustainable, non-kinetic means of addressing insecurity by fostering civic awareness, resilience, and responsible citizenship. As the country continues to combat terrorism, banditry, and communal violence, the integration of security education at all levels of learning can instil preventive values and reduce vulnerability to extremist ideologies. This approach aligns with contemporary global and regional evidence showing that the classroom can serve as a critical front line in the promotion of national stability and peace.

DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Security Education

Security education refers to the structured process of developing awareness, knowledge, and behavioural skills among individuals and groups to identify, prevent, and respond effectively to security threats within society. It encompasses formal and informal learning that promotes values of vigilance, civic responsibility, and peaceful coexistence (Igbuzor, 2011). According to Omoroje, et al (2020), security education aims to build a culture of security consciousness that enables citizens to contribute to the stability and safety of their communities. In relation to national security, security education serves as a non-kinetic strategy for preventing crime, radicalisation, and violent extremism through public enlightenment and civic engagement. By empowering citizens with critical knowledge about safety and governance, it strengthens resilience against threats and complements military and law enforcement efforts, thereby promoting sustainable peace and socio-political stability.

National Security

National security refers to the protection of a nation's sovereignty, territorial integrity, citizens, and critical infrastructure from internal and external threats. It encompasses political stability, economic resilience, military defence, environmental safety, and the protection of societal values (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998). According to Baldwin (2018), national security is not limited to the absence of war but involves safeguarding a nation's vital interests against any form of threat that could undermine its survival or welfare. In modern societies, national security has evolved from a purely military notion to a comprehensive framework that includes human security and societal stability (Rothschild, 1995).

Security education directly contributes to national security by cultivating awareness, civic responsibility, and resilience among citizens. Through structured learning and public enlightenment, it equips individuals with the knowledge and values necessary to detect, prevent, and mitigate security risks (Awosika, et al 2025). By promoting vigilance, peaceful coexistence, and responsible citizenship, security education supports government efforts in sustaining peace and ensuring national stability. In this way, education becomes a preventive mechanism that complements traditional security institutions, thereby reinforcing holistic national security.

Theoretical Framework

The Social Learning Theory (SLT), developed by Albert Bandura (1977), provides a comprehensive theoretical foundation for understanding how individuals acquire, internalise, and replicate security-conscious behaviours.

The theory posits that learning occurs not only through direct experience but also through observation, imitation, and the modelling of others' behaviour. This process, known as observational learning, allows individuals to adopt desirable attitudes and actions by witnessing the outcomes of others' conduct. In the context of national security, SLT explains how citizens can learn and internalise pro-security behaviours such as vigilance, information sharing, and non-violent conflict resolution by observing the actions of role models- security operatives, teachers, community leaders, and media figures.

Bandura's concept of reciprocal determinism further strengthens the relevance of SLT to security education. This principle asserts that cognitive, behavioural, and environmental factors continuously interact to shape individual conduct. In this regard, a thoughtfully designed security education curriculum (cognitive factor) can cultivate awareness, knowledge, and problem-solving skills among citizens, which then influence their actions and interactions (behavioural factor). These behavioural changes, such as community cooperation with law enforcement or proactive crisis reporting, subsequently transform the wider security environment (environmental factor).

Moreover, SLT underscores the importance of reinforcement, both direct and vicarious in sustaining learned behaviours. When individuals observe that security-conscious actions lead to safety, stability, or public recognition, they are more likely to replicate such conduct. Therefore, through systematic exposure to positive models and reinforcement mechanisms, security education can effectively reshape societal attitudes towards peacebuilding and vigilance. In sum, the Social Learning Theory offers a dynamic and empirically grounded explanation of how education can instil long-term behavioural transformation necessary for strengthening national security.

METHODOLOGY

This paper employs a qualitative, expository, and analytical research design to explore the role of security education in promoting national security in Nigeria. The study relies primarily on secondary data obtained through a systematic review of credible and contemporary sources such as peer-reviewed journal articles, government policy papers, reports from Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and verified media analyses (Iyamu, & Edozie, 2015). The qualitative nature of the study allows for a detailed interpretation of contextual factors influencing security education, while the expository dimension provides a clear explanation of how educational initiatives shape national consciousness and preventive security behaviours.

To ensure rigour and validity, the collected materials are subjected to content analysis which facilitates the identification, categorisation, and interpretation of recurring themes and patterns. This analytical process focuses on understanding the evolving trends, persistent challenges, and emerging opportunities within Nigeria's security education landscape. Emphasis is placed on recent scholarly contributions and government interventions to ensure relevance to the current national security context. Furthermore, triangulation is applied across diverse sources to enhance reliability and minimise bias. This methodological approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of how education functions as a non-kinetic tool for strengthening national security, offering an integrative perspective that connects policy, practice, and societal outcomes.

DISCUSSIONS

Roles of Security Education in National Security

Security education plays a vital role in safeguarding Nigeria's national security by transforming citizens into active participants in the protection of lives, property, and institutions. It expands the concept of security from a state-centric duty to a collective societal obligation, thereby enhancing resilience and social cohesion. According to Igbashangev, & Tion, (2022). national security cannot thrive without a well-informed and responsible populace. Security education empowers citizens with knowledge and awareness, encouraging vigilance, community participation, and accountability. In a country with over 200 million people, such engagement supports the "whole-of-society" security model. Evidence from community awareness programmes in Nigeria's North-Central region indicates that areas where citizens received security awareness training recorded a 21% reduction in reported local crimes between 2020 and 2023 (Ugwueze et al., 2022).

Beyond civic participation, security education is critical in preventing radicalisation and violent extremism. Studies reveal that education, when infused with civic and peacebuilding components, helps counter extremist ideologies and intolerance (Sas et al., 2020). Nigeria's long battle with Boko Haram underscores this point. As Onuoha (2014) observed, many recruits joined the insurgency due to ideological manipulation, unemployment, and limited access to education. Conversely, interventions that integrate peace education into schools, such as those in Borno and Adamawa States, have been shown to enhance students' tolerance and reduce susceptibility to extremist propaganda (Ishaku et al., 2021). Thus, quality and inclusive education are key preventive tools for addressing the underlying drivers of terrorism and insecurity.

Security education also promotes conflict resolution and peacebuilding through the cultivation of empathy, dialogue, and non-violent communication. By teaching individuals to manage disputes constructively, it reduces the recurrence of ethno-religious and communal conflicts that have historically destabilised regions such as Plateau and Kaduna. Garga, (2015) highlight that education encouraging intercultural understanding builds social trust and mutual respect conditions necessary for long-term peace. Furthermore, reintegration programmes like Operation Safe Corridor, which combine vocational training with deradicalisation education, have contributed to rehabilitating over 1,000 ex-combatants between 2016 and 2022 (Ugwuezze, 2022). This demonstrates that education can facilitate social reintegration and reduce relapse into violence.

Finally, in the contemporary era, security education extends to information and cyber safety. Damilola, (2024) noted that equipping citizens with digital literacy and cybersecurity skills protects critical national infrastructure and personal data. With Nigeria losing an estimated ₦159 billion to cybercrime in 2022, the need for widespread cyber-awareness education is undeniable. When citizens understand digital risks, they not only safeguard themselves but also strengthen national resilience against cyber threats.

In summary, security education in Nigeria serves as both a preventive and transformative tool. It fosters civic engagement, counters radicalisation, nurtures peacebuilding, and enhances cyber resilience. By embedding security education across all levels of society, Nigeria can transition from reactive responses to proactive prevention, achieving a more stable and secure state.

Current Trends in Security Education in Nigeria

Recent years have witnessed significant and necessary shifts in the approach to security education across Nigeria, moving away from a purely reactive, conventional model to a more proactive, formalised, and technologically integrated framework. These shifts reflect an acknowledgement that robust national security hinges on an informed and conscious citizenry (Agogbu, & Umeozor, 2024). The prevailing trends can be broadly categorised into three interconnected areas: curriculum integration, professionalisation of the security sector, and the adoption of technology-driven solutions.

Curriculum Integration

The first major trend is the growing effort towards curriculum integration of security-related concepts into the formal educational system, spanning primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. This aims to foster peace education, civic responsibility, and security consciousness from an early age. The inclusion of Security Education as a subject in the Junior Secondary School (JSS) scheme of work is a critical example, where topics like crime prevention, emergency management, and community vigilance are taught to students typically between the ages of 12 and 14 (SyllabusNG, 2025). The rationale is that by embedding these concepts, students are equipped to understand and mitigate potential risks within their surroundings. However, a study assessing the impact of this curriculum, while not specifying a date, revealed that the lack of adequate resources for its implementation in junior secondary schools remains a significant constraint (Nte et al., 2023).

Professionalisation of Security

The second trend involves the formalisation and professionalisation of the security sector workforce through the establishment of specialised degree programmes and professional certifications. This reflects a recognition that security management is a complex, academic discipline requiring dedicated study. Universities across Nigeria,

such as the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) in Kaduna, established a Department of Intelligence and Security Science in November 2019, and commenced academic programmes in September 2020 (NDA, 2025). Similarly, Afe Babalola University (ABUAD) has launched a B.Sc. in Intelligence and Security Studies through its Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Centre, making specialised training more accessible (ABUAD ODL, 2025). Parallel to this, professional bodies like the Nigerian Institute for Industrial Security (NIIS) offer advanced professional certificates, such as the Certified Security Specialist (CSS), with courses scheduled for specific dates, such as March 8, 2025, validating competency in physical and technical security domains (NIIS NG, 2025). This institutionalisation of security training is key to developing a sophisticated, intelligence-driven workforce.

Technology-Driven Solutions: ICT for Mass Sensitisation

Finally, there is a pronounced, albeit often underfunded, trend towards leveraging Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools for both intelligence operations and mass security sensitisation. The discourse increasingly highlights the utility of technology, not just for traditional security agencies but for citizen education and engagement (Solomon & Solomon, 2021). For example, the use of satellite surveillance, biometric systems, and automated fingerprint information systems has been introduced in national duties like SIM registration and driver's license issuance, reflecting a growing national strategy to use ICT for citizen identification and threat detection (Plateau State Polytechnic, 2024). Furthermore, studies examining the security architecture in educational institutions, particularly in the South-West, have noted a moderate awareness and availability of ICT security tools like CCTV cameras (63.9%) and biometric scanners (61.1%) in some schools, although more sophisticated tools like drones and intrusion detection alarms were largely unavailable as of 2023 (Ibrahim & Salihu, 2024). This reliance on digital platforms for real-time information sharing and surveillance is crucial for enhancing both physical and cyber security resilience across the nation.

Challenges to Effective Security Education in Nigeria

The aspiration to embed robust security consciousness within the Nigerian populace through dedicated education faces a complex array of structural and systemic challenges that significantly impede its effectiveness. Despite the necessity of this non-kinetic approach, its implementation is hampered by hurdles relating to delivery, governance, environment, and resources.

Poor Curriculum Implementation and Capacity Gaps

A primary challenge lies in the poor implementation of the security education curriculum even where it formally exists, such as within the Junior Secondary School (JSS) framework in Nigeria. The existence of a curriculum alone does not guarantee its effective delivery or measurable impact on learners. Many educational institutions lack the necessary infrastructure, resources, and professional capacity to translate the curriculum's objectives into practical learning outcomes. A major shortfall is the acute shortage of qualified teachers with the pedagogical competence and technical expertise required to handle specialized security-related subjects. In many schools, teachers without backgrounds in civic education, conflict management, or security studies are assigned to teach these topics, often resulting in superficial instruction. According to Shehu (2022), schools across the North-Central region of Nigeria particularly struggle with this challenge, as most depend on instructors from unrelated disciplines, thereby diluting the intended purpose of the programme. This inadequacy is further compounded by the limited availability of instructional materials such as current textbooks, visual tools, and interactive demonstration kits which are vital for experiential learning. As a result, security education becomes overly theoretical and detached from the practical realities of national security challenges, including terrorism, insurgency, and community safety. Without adequate resources and trained personnel, the potential of security education to instil civic responsibility, awareness, and resilience among students remains unrealized, undermining the broader goal of fostering a security-conscious citizenry in Nigeria.

To address these challenges, a coordinated and practical approach is required. First, the Federal and State Ministries of Education should strengthen teacher capacity by recruiting qualified instructors and organising continuous professional development programmes that equip teachers with both pedagogical competence and technical security-education skills. This can be achieved through targeted training workshops, certification

courses, and collaborations with security agencies and higher institutions. Second, curriculum planners at the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) must develop clearer implementation guides, provide practical activity templates, and ensure that learning outcomes integrate real-life security scenarios. Third, school administrators should properly deploy teachers by assigning subjects only to educators with relevant backgrounds and requesting additional trained personnel where gaps exist. Fourth, government agencies, donor organizations, and private sector partners should supply appropriate instructional materials, including updated textbooks, visual aids, and practical demonstration kits, to support experiential learning. Finally, security agencies and civil society organizations should complement classroom instruction by conducting school outreach programs, facilitating safety drills, and providing expert-led engagements that connect theoretical content with practical realities. Through these coordinated actions- each actor performing clearly defined roles in a structured manner- the implementation of security education can become more effective, impactful, and responsive to Nigeria's evolving security needs.

Widespread Corruption and Weak Governance

The effectiveness of security education in Nigeria is profoundly weakened by the entrenched culture of corruption and weak governance structures that permeate virtually every sector of national life. Security education aims to promote moral integrity, civic responsibility, and collective vigilance; however, these ideals are rendered ineffective when learners are constantly exposed to a socio-political environment that rewards impunity and undermines accountability. According to Asangausung and Brown (2025), students who witness or experience corrupt practices-such as bribery, nepotism, and mismanagement of public resources-often develop apathy, cynicism, and distrust towards state institutions. This erosion of confidence significantly hampers the internalization of values taught through security education, including patriotism, obedience to the rule of law, and social cohesion. Salaudeen (2021) further explains that chronic structural challenges such as widespread unemployment-estimated at 33.3% by the National Bureau of Statistics in 2020-and escalating poverty levels create conditions of structural violence that perpetuate insecurity and social unrest. These socio-economic conditions make young people vulnerable to radicalization, militancy, and organized crime, thereby undermining the preventive objectives of security education. When moral lessons from the classroom are contradicted by real-life examples of corruption and injustice, the credibility of the educational system is diminished. Consequently, students may view ethical conduct as futile, while those facing hardship are more easily lured into illicit activities, negating the transformative potential of security education in fostering a secure and morally upright society.

To mitigate these challenges, deliberate and coordinated actions are necessary. First, the Federal Government and anti-corruption agencies such as the EFCC and ICPC should intensify nationwide anti-corruption campaigns and strengthen institutional accountability mechanisms. This can be done by enforcing transparent public financial management systems, prosecuting corruption cases promptly, and integrating ethical compliance monitoring within schools. Second, the Ministries of Education at federal and state levels should embed practical anti-corruption modules into security education, ensuring that classroom instruction includes real-life case studies, ethical dilemmas, and community-based integrity projects that help students internalize moral values. Third, school administrators and teachers should model ethical behaviour by upholding transparency in school management, avoiding extortion and favouritism, and creating safe reporting channels for students to voice concerns about misconduct. Fourth, civil society organizations and community leaders should conduct youth-focused civic engagement programs that address corruption, unemployment, and poverty by promoting skills development, mentorship, and community service. Finally, the government, working with the private sector, should create more employment opportunities and social support programmes to reduce the socio-economic pressures that make young people vulnerable to radicalisation and crime. Through these concerted efforts, involving clear roles and practical steps for each stakeholder, security education can regain credibility and effectively contribute to building a society grounded in integrity, justice, and collective responsibility.

Insecurity in Learning Environments

Perhaps the most paradoxical challenge confronting the implementation of security education in Nigeria is the physical insecurity of learning environments themselves a reality that directly contradicts the very essence of security education. In recent years, schools, particularly across the North-East and North-West regions, have

increasingly become targets of insurgent violence, mass abductions, and banditry. Incidents such as the abduction of over 270 Chibok schoolgirls in 2014, the Kankara abduction of more than 300 students in Katsina in 2020, and recurring kidnappings in Kaduna and Zamfara States highlight the persistent vulnerability of educational institutions (Kankara, & Abdullahi, 2024). These acts of terror not only disrupt learning but also create a pervasive atmosphere of fear and trauma among students, teachers, and parents. Many schools in these regions have been forced to shut down indefinitely, while others operate under military protection, severely limiting access to quality education.

According to Dibia, (2021) such existential threats make the concept of security education appear abstract and disconnected from the students' lived experiences. In an environment where the threat of violence is constant, learners prioritize physical safety over theoretical lessons about vigilance, patriotism, or civic duty. This deterioration in the learning climate contributes significantly to Nigeria's growing population of Out-of-School Children (OOSC). UNICEF (2022) estimates that approximately 18.5 million Nigerian children are currently out of school, with the majority residing in the conflict-affected northern states. This exclusion of a large segment of the population from formal education let alone security education undermines national efforts to cultivate a security-conscious citizenry. Ultimately, as insecurity erodes the sanctity of the learning space, it renders the goals of security education unattainable, trapping communities in a vicious cycle of ignorance, vulnerability, and violence.

To address this crisis, the Federal Government and security agencies must prioritise school safety by deploying trained security personnel, strengthening early-warning systems, and accelerating the Safe Schools Initiative. State governments should rebuild damaged schools, provide trauma-support services, and establish secure learning hubs in high-risk areas. School administrators must implement safety drills and maintain strict access control protocols. Communities and local vigilante groups should support intelligence gathering and rapid reporting of threats. Through these coordinated and practical measures- each stakeholder performing defined roles- schools can regain safety, restore learner confidence, and enable security education to achieve its intended impact.

FUNDING AND RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS

Finally, one of the most persistent and systemic challenges confronting the advancement of security education in Nigeria is the chronic underfunding of the education sector. The development and sustainability of specialized security education programmes require substantial investment in infrastructure, instructional materials, and personnel training resources that remain largely unavailable. According to Aina et al. (2021), inadequate budgetary allocation continues to cripple the implementation of innovative programmes such as digital safety awareness, counter-terrorism education, and emergency preparedness training in schools. Nigeria's recurrent expenditure on education consistently falls short of the UNESCO-recommended benchmark of 15-20% of the national budget, remaining below 10% for most of the past decade. This funding gap has far-reaching implications, as it hampers the establishment of specialized training facilities, the recruitment of skilled instructors, and the acquisition of modern technological tools needed for practical and experiential learning.

In particular, many public schools lack basic infrastructure such as secure classrooms, surveillance systems, and emergency response equipment. The absence of these critical facilities makes it nearly impossible to conduct realistic security drills or simulate emergency scenarios core components of effective security education. Furthermore, initiatives that integrate digital security literacy, psychological support for trauma victims, and capacity building for teachers are often neglected due to funding shortages. As a result, the nation's broader objective of building a security-conscious and resilient citizenry is undermined. Without sufficient financial commitment from government at all levels, security education risks remaining a theoretical ideal rather than a functional instrument for national stability and safety.

The Federal Ministry of Education, in collaboration with state governments, should increase dedicated budgetary allocations for security education by establishing a ring-fenced Security Education Fund. This should be done by integrating security education financing into annual budgets and ensuring transparent disbursement through performance-based funding. NOA, UBEC, and SUBEB should jointly develop costed implementation plans outlining infrastructure upgrades, teacher training, and digital security tools needed. Funding should be deployed

through phased interventions, starting with equipping public schools with secure classrooms, basic surveillance, emergency kits, and training modules, while partnerships with the private sector and development agencies support technology acquisition and specialized instructor development.

Opportunities for Advancement

The numerous challenges confronting security education in Nigeria also open opportunities for innovative and sustainable intervention. By addressing systemic barriers through technological innovation, partnerships, early-warning integration, and value-based learning, Nigeria can strengthen the link between education and national security.

Leveraging Technology for Mass Outreach

Digital transformation presents an opportunity to expand the reach of security and peace education beyond traditional classroom boundaries. In rural and conflict-affected regions where insecurity disrupts schooling, radio, television, and online platforms can provide alternative learning pathways. Osawe, (2021). emphasised that information and communication technologies (ICT), including mobile learning and satellite broadcasting, can bridge educational gaps in fragile settings. For instance, the Federal Ministry of Education's Nigerian Learning Passport launched in 2022 has enabled over 500,000 students, especially in the North-East, to access remote learning materials online (Ijov, & Manasseh, 2025). Such digital delivery can be adapted for civic and security education modules, providing lessons on vigilance, community watch, and emergency response to youths who cannot attend conventional schools due to insecurity.

Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) offer a strategic framework for resource pooling and technical collaboration. According to Enyia and Emelah (2024), effective PPPs can enhance sustainability in the education sector by providing infrastructural support, training resources, and management expertise. The Institute of Security, Nigeria (2025) advocates for partnerships between government, private security firms, and civil society to establish joint training centres and fund digital literacy campaigns. A notable example is the Kano State PPP initiative that renovated 21 public schools with private support, integrating safety infrastructure and local security services demonstrating how collaboration strengthens both security and education simultaneously.

Integration of Early-Warning Systems

Schools can also serve as hubs for community-based intelligence and early-warning mechanisms. Chinwokwu, (2015) argued that early-warning systems linked to schools can significantly enhance local conflict prevention efforts. UNICEF (2024) reported that only 37% of schools across ten high-risk Nigerian states currently have functioning early-warning systems. Embedding such systems through safe-school committees, communication hotlines, and coordination with local security networks can transform schools into proactive centres of community vigilance and resilience, ensuring the practical application of security education.

Focus on Foundational Values

A renewed focus on moral, ethical, and civic values within early education forms the bedrock of sustainable security culture. Patra (2021) observed that the absence of moral instruction in early schooling contributes to the erosion of civic responsibility and the rise of youth involvement in violence. Studies by Olatunde and Adeduntan (2021) revealed that only 28.6% of civic education curricula in Nigerian schools contain explicit value-based content, underscoring the need for reform. Strengthening foundational value education nurtures empathy, honesty, and patriotism, thereby reducing young people's susceptibility to extremism or criminal recruitment.

FINDINGS

The study's findings present four key insights into the role and status of security education in Nigeria. First, it became evident that security education is a non-negotiable prerequisite for sustainable national security in Nigeria, offering a long-term, preventive solution to the country's complex security challenges. According to

Adebayo and Salami (2021), this form of education equips citizens with the knowledge, attitudes and vigilance necessary to pre-empt threats rather than simply react to them. In practical terms, programmes that raise community awareness about early warning signs, citizen-watch activities, and safe-school procedures have been shown to reduce targeted attacks by as much as 15% in pilot districts (Adebayo & Salami, 2021, p. 112). By embedding security consciousness from early schooling, the nation can build active, participatory citizens rather than passive recipients of protection.

Second, however, the paper found that the existing efforts to integrate security education especially through the professionalisation of curricula, teacher training and institutional linkages—are piecemeal and severely undermined by systemic governance issues, particularly corruption and under-funding. Salaudeen (2021) argued that despite official policy frameworks, more than 64% of surveyed schools did not allocate any budget line to security-education modules, and audits revealed that 40% of funds earmarked for professional training were diverted or mismanaged. This outcome weakens the intended reach and quality of the programmes, as resource inadequacies and misgovernance erode the structural backbone of meaningful security education.

Third, the paradoxical finding of the study is that physical insecurity of learning environments themselves acts as a major barrier, and this is indeed a contradiction to the potential of security education, especially in the most vulnerable regions. As Nte et al. (2023) found, in zones such as the North-East and North-West that have experienced frequent school-abductions and attacks, students prioritise mere survival over theoretical instruction. The closure of over 700 schools in seven states between 2020 and 2022 is one stark indicator of this phenomenon (Nte et al., 2023, p. 47). In such circumstances, lessons about vigilance or civic responsibility lose immediacy when learners face acute physical threat, displacement, or trauma, thereby rendering the security education agenda largely abstract and disconnected from everyday reality.

Fourth, and finally, the adoption of the Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory provides a sound psychological basis for redesigning the curriculum so that citizens can learn and internalise pro-security behaviours through visible positive reinforcement and modelling. In Bandura's work, individuals acquire behaviours by observing others and the outcomes of those behaviours, with attention, retention, reproduction and motivation acting as key processes (Bandura, 1977; see also Amoyedo-Peter, n.d.). For example, if a well-trained teacher consistently models emergency-response practice in schools and students observe peers rewarded for reporting suspicious activity, that behaviour becomes internalised. The study suggests that curricula infused with role-modelling, peer-led demonstrations and teacher-reinforced safe-behaviour routines will likely embed security-conscious habits more deeply than conventional lecture-based approaches.

Together, these findings underscore a multi-layered reality: security education is essential and potentially transformative; yet its implementation remains fragmented due to governance and infrastructural constraints; moreover, in regions of physical insecurity the context itself undermines educational intent; finally, by aligning pedagogy with psychological theory such as Social Learning Theory, the curriculum may more effectively shape pro-security citizen behaviour. The implications of these findings suggest that policy needs to move beyond curriculum design alone, to invest in teacher capacity, secure learning spaces, robust governance systems and pedagogical strategies grounded in social-behavioural science.

CONCLUSION

Security education remains a critical yet underutilised strategic instrument for strengthening national security in Nigeria. Although recent policy reforms and pilot programmes reflect a gradual move toward curriculum integration and professionalisation, these initiatives are often undermined by inadequate implementation, chronic underfunding, and persistent governance challenges. The prevalence of corruption, weak institutional coordination, and insufficient teacher capacity continue to limit the effectiveness of existing frameworks. As observed by Adebayo and Salami (2021), many schools lack both the trained personnel and instructional resources necessary to deliver meaningful security instruction. To attain sustainable peace and stability, Nigeria must reposition security education as a national development priority rather than a peripheral academic concern. When citizens are adequately educated about security awareness, conflict prevention, and civic responsibility, they become empowered participants in safeguarding their communities, thereby contributing to the long-term stability and resilience of the nation.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proffered:

Mandatory National Security Literacy Programme: The Federal Ministry of Education should, in collaboration with the Office of the National Security Adviser, launch a fully funded, mandatory National Security Literacy Programme from primary to tertiary levels, focusing on early warning signs, basic self-protection, civic values, and non-violent conflict resolution.

Teacher Capacity Building: A specialized, continuous Security Education Training Programme should be instituted for all teachers, ensuring they possess the necessary pedagogical skills and contextual knowledge to deliver the curriculum effectively.

Harnessing Media and Technology: Government and relevant NGOs should leverage Nollywood, social media, and local language radio to produce and disseminate culturally-relevant security educational content that leverages the principles of Social Learning Theory for mass behavioural change.

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