

Assessing the Level of Insecurity in Rural Secondary Schools of Zamfara State

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Abstract

In Nigeria, insecurity has become a persistent challenge confronting the management of public secondary schools, particularly in rural communities where security threats continue to disrupt educational activities. This study assessed the level of insecurity in rural public secondary schools in Gusau Education Zone, Zamfara State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised school administrators and teachers in government-owned rural public secondary schools, while a sample of 123 respondents, consisting of 10 secondary school principals and 113 teachers, was selected using a multistage sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Assessing Insecurity in Secondary Schools (AISS), adapted from Ojukwu (2017), with a reported Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.88. Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that the overall level of insecurity in rural public secondary schools was at moderate extent ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.27$), indicating that insecurity remains a significant challenge to effective school administration. Based on findings, the study recommends that educational authorities should strengthen school security management system through consistent collaboration between school and relevant security agencies in the provision of improved security planning, adequate provision of security personnel and infrastructure, regular security risk assessments, and enhanced inclusion of school-based host communities to ensure safe and conducive learning environments which will further improve the effectiveness of school administration.

Keywords: School security, insecurity, secondary school, school administration

Introduction

Insecurity is a social illness that occurs as a consequence of the presence of a danger to human life and economic operations. It is a negative feeling involving fear, anxiety, uncertainty and injustice, among others. When an individual does not have control over a situation but has to rely on the cooperation of others that cannot be guaranteed, the result may be frustration or insecurity which serves as threat to quality teaching (Mustapha *et al.*, 2023). Best (2016) sees insecurity as a degenerated stage of conflict, threats to human security, intense violence characterized by rebellious, death and injury. Insecurity is a state or condition in the life of a social unit, system, organization or society in which the existence of a problem assumes critical dimension to the extent that the survival or existence of the social system. Insecurity is associated with feelings of vulnerability, uncertainty, danger and or threat to life. Mogboh (2022) regarded insecurity as a state of being subjected to fear, threat, danger, molestation, intimidation, and harassment of individuals. Manga (2019) sees insecurity as a condition of

fear of imminent danger and real experience of harmful activities that cause properties and human destruction. Moreover, Insecurity refers to a state of being endangered or lack of proper security measures in place. According to Ukutegbe *et al.* (2025) insecurity is operationalized to be a situation where safety and protection of lives and properties are lacking or uncertain while people are being subjected to anxiety, fear, injury, danger, or worry as it adversely affects meaningful development of any kind in all areas of human endeavour. Conversely, insecurity is the direct opposite of security. Arisi (2011) defined security as the existence of a relatively stable environment in which individuals, feel protected. According to Ukutegbe *et al.* (2025) security can be described as a state that guarantees protection from all threats by consciously establishing secure structures or programmes that ensure the trust of the public. In the context of educational management, Manga (2019), defined school security is the establishment and sustenance of a peaceful school environment in which staff and students perform their activities without fear or apprehension of impending threats or attacks on schools.

On this background therefore, it can be said that, insecurity is a threat to the development of education in the north-west region of Nigeria. Educational stakeholders, including students, teachers and the government are being frustrated by the state of insecurity in the region including Zamfara State, leading to educational decay (Ngwoke & Akabike, 2022). There are different forms of insecurity incidents targeted against educational institutions in Zamfara State including the public secondary schools located in rural areas. In the context of this study the following were discussed:

First, armed banditry which refer to acts of robbery, pillage, and violence in areas where the rule of law has broken down. It is synonymous with lawlessness, thieving, robbery, and pillage (Thompson, et al., 2024). Okoli and Ugwu (2019) viewed armed banditry as organized crimes with violence consisting armed robbery, cattle rustling and kidnapping through the use of force or threat thereby intimidating individuals and groups mostly rural communities, the perpetrators engage in killings, rapping and robbing the victims. In the words of Rufus et al. (2025), banditry is defined as organized criminal activities carried out by armed groups or individuals who engage in violent acts such as robbery, kidnapping, extortion, and cattle rustling, typically in rural and semi-urban areas. Unlike other forms of criminality, banditry is characterized by its systematic nature and its ability to destabilize large regions, often targeting vulnerable populations such as farmers, travelers and local communities. Conceptually, banditry is a derivative of the term bandit, meaning an unlawful armed group terrorizing people and confiscating their properties. To sum up, armed banditry, characterized by unlawful acts such as robbery, kidnapping, and looting using arms and coercion (Akinyetun, 2022),

Second, physical attacks on schools which refers to an intentional act of violence or threat of violence directed at educational institutions, students, teachers, or school personnel, carried out for political, ideological, sectarian, religious, or criminal motives. These attacks include armed raids, shootings, or other violent acts that disrupt convenient school setting and undermine the safety of education systems. Such attacks are recognized internationally as

violations of the right to education and are often documented in conflict and terrorism contexts, (Brookings Institution, 2025 as cited in Kingsley *et al.*, 2026). School attacks and forced closures compromise the right to education undermining efforts to achieve universal, inclusive, safe schooling. For millions of Nigerian children, education becomes uncertain or unsafe, threatening both individual futures and national development.

Third, kidnapping, according to Legal Clarity, (2026), kidnapping is the unlawful restraint or movement of a person by force, threat, or deception, carried out with a specific criminal purpose such as holding someone for ransom, facilitating another felony, or inflicting harm. In Zamfara State, there were many insecurity incidents occurred in schools in the form of kidnapping or abduction of the school personnel including the students, teachers, and school administrators.

Based on the existing literature reviewed in the conduct of this study, it was found that the consequences of insecurity incidents against public schools are enormous; however, those related to educational management include frequent disruption of academic activities, declining student enrollment, increased dropout rates, shortage of teachers, poor academic performance, and the destruction of school infrastructure. These challenges collectively weaken school administration and reduce the overall effectiveness of the educational system in affected areas.

Zamfara State has witnessed persistent security challenges over the past decade, with educational institutions increasingly becoming targets of attacks by armed bandits and other criminal groups. One of the most notable incidents occurred on 26 February 2021 when armed bandits invaded Government Girls Science Secondary School, Jangebe, and abducted over 300 female students (British Broadcasting corporation, 2021). Similarly, on 1 September 2021, Government Day Secondary School, Kaya, in Maradun Local Government Area was attacked, resulting in the abduction of 73 students (Wahab, 2021). These incidents generated widespread concern among stakeholders in the education sector and heightened fears regarding the safety of students and school personnel. The persistent threat of attacks on schools compelled the Zamfara State Government to close several schools in vulnerable communities, while some schools continued to operate under strict security measures. The recurrence of such incidents has created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty among parents, students, teachers, and school administrators. Consequently, insecurity has disrupted teaching and learning activities, reduced student enrolment and attendance, contributed to teacher absenteeism, and increased the challenges confronting educational administrators in the effective management of schools. It is against this backdrop that the present study seeks to evaluate the level of insecurity in rural public secondary schools in Gusau Education Zone.

Statement of the Problem

In recent times, Nigeria has been experiencing, high rate of violence against public schools which includes armed banditry, terrorism, kidnapping of school teachers, learners, and school-base local communities, and destruction of school infrastructural facilities are among the violent activities threatening the sustenance of educational development in the country. In the same vein, Vanguard 2024 reported that, Insecurity has taken a center stage in Zamfara state as none of the 14 local government capitals is free from banditry activities and the most worrisome is that even the state capital, Gusau is not safe as pockets of banditry activities have taken turns periodically. Among the major challenges imposed by insecurity in Nigeria are the destruction of lives, displacement of settlement, traumatic disorder, and destruction of infrastructures, which has significantly caused a lack of access to basic social services delivery, including education and health thereby depriving children of their access to quality education, good health services, protection, and many other critical services (Ogunode *et al.*, 2021, Ali *et al.*, 2023). This was exacerbated in recent times by attacks on learning institutions and the abduction of students and teachers among others. Zamfara state has been one of the most educationally disadvantaged states in Nigeria (Dahiru *et al.*, 2023). Bakari (2022) observed in his study that Zamfara state is also one of the states in Nigeria that have been experiencing a number of problems related to insecurity that threatens the sustainability of the schools and heavily cause the downfall of the standards of education in the state. As a result of such scenarios, following the rampant attacks and abduction of hundreds of students in Zamfara State, on September 1, 2021 the Zamfara state government alongside the Nigeria Police Force jointly shutdown all public schools across the fourteen local government areas of the state for a prolonged period of time (Channels, 2021). Subsequently, after a partial reopening of some schools in the state, as at August 2022, a total of 75 public secondary schools shut since 2021 over unsafe environment reasons (The Cable, 2022). Unfortunately, the number of the government-owned public schools closed in Zamfara state between 2021 and December 2023 rose from 75 to 168 schools (Wiki Times, 2023). A recent revelation by the Zamfara State Ministry of Education alerted that the problems of insecurity persists and requires timely maximum efforts to rescue the public schools and all educational institutions from total destruction (Madawaki, 2023; as cited in Daily Post, 2023). However, TVC (2023) reported that, due to the rampant closure of government-owned public schools in recent years, the Zamfara State government moves to establish a taskforce committee to strategize the process of the reopening of the affected schools. Thus, the problems of insecurity still persist among educational institutions in Zamfara State. On this ground, it was found that, very little prior research investigations were conducted on the assessment of the extent to which insecurity incidents occurred in public schools in the remote areas in Zamfara state despite the rise of insecurity challenges in the state. To fill this literature gap, this study seeks to evaluate the level of insecurity in public secondary school in Gusau education zone.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess the level of insecurity in rural secondary schools in Gusau education zone, Zamfara State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the demographic information of the respondents in Gusau education zone of Zamfara State
2. determine the level of insecurity in rural secondary schools in Gusau education zone of Zamfara State

Research Questions

1. what is the demographic information of the respondents in Gusau education zone of Zamfara State?
2. what is the level of insecurity in rural secondary schools in Gusau education zone, Zamfara state?

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to collect data from respondents and describe the existing level of insecurity in rural public secondary schools in Gusau Education Zone. Descriptive survey research is suitable for studies that seek to obtain information on the current status of a phenomenon and describe it as it exists without manipulating any variables (McCombes, 2023). The design also allows researchers to gather data from a large population and systematically analyze respondents' perceptions, experiences, and opinions regarding the phenomenon under investigation (McCombes, 2022).

Therefore, the descriptive survey design was considered appropriate for assessing the level of insecurity in rural public secondary schools in Gusau Education Zone. The population of the study comprises all school administrators (Principals and vice principals) and teachers of government-owned public secondary schools in rural areas in Gusau education zone. A sample size of 123 respondents comprising 10 secondary school principals and 113 teachers from the 10 selected secondary schools who participated in the study through multistage sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Assessing the level of Insecurity in Secondary Schools" which was designed on a five-point Likert's Scale. The instrument has 2 sections with a total number of 15 items. Section A contained 4 items on the demographic information of the respondents; Section B contained 11 items on the level of insecurity.

The instrument was adopted from Ojukwu's (2017) questionnaire on the level of insecurity in Nigerian schools with Cronbach alpha's reliability value of 0.88 indicating that the instrument is acceptable -internal consistency. The data collection exercise was conducted through on-field survey visit with the support of two professionally trained research assistants who visited the selected schools, administered the instrument to the respondents and ensured

immediate return of the responses. The data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages were used to analyze the demographic characteristics of respondents. While, the research question was answered using Mean and Standard Deviation. The mean scores were interpreted using a three-level criterion, where 1.00 – 2.33 indicates a Low level, 2.34 – 3.67 indicates a Moderate level, and 3.68 – 5.00 indicated a High level.

Method of Data Collection

Out of the 123 questionnaires administered to the respondents, 111 were properly completed and returned, representing a response rate of (90.24%), while 12 questionnaires, representing (9.76%), were not returned due to incomplete responses. The response rate of 90.24% was considered sufficiently high for the data to be regarded as adequate for the analysis and interpretation of the study findings.

Results

1. **Research Question 1:** What is the demographic information of the respondents in Gusau education zone of Zamfara State?

The demographic variables in this study (gender, cadre, educational qualification, length of in-service experience) were analysed using frequency distribution and percentage of respondents as shown in Table 1:

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n = 111)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	77	69.4
	Female	34	30.6
	Total	111	100.0
Designation	Principal	20	18.0
	Teacher	91	82.0
	Total	111	100.0
Educational Qualification	NCE	47	42.3
	B.Ed	58	52.3
	M.Ed	6	5.4
	Total	111	100.0
Years of Experience	1 – 5 Years	26	23.4
	6 – 10 Years	40	36.0
	11 Years and Above	45	40.5
	Total	111	100.0

Source: Researchers' Field Survey, 2026.

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 111 respondents who participated in the study. Regarding gender distribution, 77 respondents (69.4%) were male, while 34 respondents (30.6%) were female. This indicates that male respondents constituted

the majority of the participants, suggesting that the teaching workforce in the selected public secondary schools is predominantly male.

With respect to designation, 91 respondents (82.0%) were teachers, whereas 20 respondents (18.0%) were principals or vice principals. This implies that the study drew its findings mainly from classroom teachers, who constitute the largest proportion of personnel in public secondary schools. Nevertheless, the inclusion of school administrators ensured that leadership perspectives were also represented in the study.

In terms of educational qualifications, the majority of the respondents, 58 (52.3%), possessed a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree. This was followed by 47 respondents (42.3%) who held the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), while only 6 respondents (5.4%) had a Master of Education (M.Ed.) degree. The absence of respondents with doctoral qualifications suggests that postgraduate qualifications beyond the master's level were not represented among the participants. Overall, the results indicate that the respondents possessed the minimum professional qualifications required for teaching, with more than half having attained bachelor's degrees.

On the years of teaching experience, 45 respondents (40.5%) had 11 years and above of teaching experience, representing the largest group. This was followed by 40 respondents (36.0%) who had between 6 and 10 years of experience, while 26 respondents (23.4%) had between 1 and 5 years of experience. This distribution indicates that the respondents were generally experienced professionals, with over three-quarters (76.5%) having at least six years of teaching experience. Consequently, the study benefited from the views of respondents with substantial professional experience, thereby enhancing the credibility and reliability of the data collected.

Research Question 2: what is the level of insecurity in rural secondary schools in Gusau education zone, Zamfara state?

Table 2 Mean and Standard Deviation Ratings of the Level of Insecurity in Public Secondary Schools

S/No	Statement	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
INS1	Armed banditry, insurgency, or unknown gunmen activities occur close to this school axis.	3.20	1.31	Moderate
INS2	Armed banditry activities around this community threaten the safety of students and staff.	3.06	1.22	Moderate
INS 3	Fear of kidnapping or abduction- affects effective teaching and learning in this school.	3.30	1.32	Moderate
INS 4	Lack of adequate perimeter fencing exposes the school to security risks.	3.36	1.47	Moderate

INS 5	Unauthorized persons easily gain access into the school compound.	3.25	1.40	Moderate
INS 6	The school lacks adequate security personnel to safeguard students and staff.	3.72	1.03	High
INS 7	Security threats in this area have disrupted normal school activities.	3.38	1.28	Moderate
INS 8	Students and teachers experience anxiety due to insecurity in the community.	3.38	1.15	Moderate
INS 9	Severe security concerns have forced this school to close down or adjust hours prematurely.	3.08	1.39	Moderate
INS10	Teachers frequently express a desire to seek transfers due to fear for their lives.	3.37	1.24	Moderate
INS11	Parents express fear concerning the security of their children in this school.	3.41	1.22	Moderate
Overall Mean		3.33	1.27	Moderate Extent

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2026.

Results obtained from Table 2 revealed the level of insecurity among rural public secondary schools in Gusau education zone. The highest-rated item is INS6 “the school lacks adequate security personnel to safeguard students and staff” ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.03$). This indicates that respondents perceived inadequate security personnel as the most prevalent insecurity challenge affecting public secondary schools. This is followed by INS11 “parents express fear concerning the security of their children in this school” ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.22$), suggesting that parental concern over student safety is a major issue. Closely following is INS8, “Students and teachers experience anxiety due to insecurity in the community” ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.15$), and INS7, “Security threats in this area have disrupted normal school activities” ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.28$), indicating that insecurity contributes to emotional distress and disruptions to school operations. Other moderately rated insecurity indicators include INS10 “teachers frequently express a desire to seek transfers due to fear for their lives” ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.24$), INS4 “lack of adequate perimeter fencing exposes the school to security risks” ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.47$), INS3 “fear of kidnapping or abduction affects effective teaching and learning in this school” ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 1.32$), INS5 “unauthorized persons easily gain access into the school compound” ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.40$), and INS1, “armed banditry, insurgency, or unknown gunmen activities occur close to this school axis” ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 1.31$).

Furthermore, respondents moderately agreed with INS9 “severe security concerns have forced this school to close down or adjust hours prematurely” ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 1.39$), and INS2 “armed banditry activities around this community threaten the safety of students and staff” ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 1.22$), which recorded the lowest mean score among all the items. Finally, the

overall grand mean score of ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.27$) indicates a moderate extent of insecurity in rural public secondary schools.

Therefore, findings from the current study suggest that insecurity in rural public secondary schools is manifested more through inadequate security infrastructure, fear, anxiety, and perceived vulnerability than through direct experiences of violent attacks. The prominence of concerns relating to insufficient security personnel, parental fears, and psychological anxiety among staff and students indicates that insecurity has become a persistent concern within the school environment. The relatively lower ratings on school closures and direct threats from armed banditry imply that while severe security incidents may not be frequently experienced across all schools, the fear of such incidents remains significant enough to influence teaching, learning, and school administration. This finding underscores the need for proactive security measures, including the provision of trained security personnel, improved school fencing, and community-based security support to enhance the safety of schools and restore confidence among stakeholders.

Discussion of Findings

The results obtained from this study revealed that, the level of insecurity in rural secondary schools in Gusau education zone, Zamfara State, Nigeria was found at a moderate extent ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.27$) indicating that insecurity remains a persistent challenge to effective school administration and educational delivery in the geographical area of the study. This finding is in-line with that of Egara *et al.* (2025), who found that there is a high level of insecurity incidents that adversely affects school effectiveness by disrupting teaching and learning processes and creating unfavourable learning environments. Adams *et al.*, (2021) who stressed that insecurity has been increasing among public secondary schools in Nigeria resulted by the rampant attacks on schools that usually lead to vandalization and outright destruction of school facilities. Adamu and Uleanya (2025), there is an alarming level of insecurity in the secondary school system in Nigeria, particularly in the northern region. This has had a detrimental impact on the country's educational environment, hindering efforts to achieve sustainable development, which is crucial for advancing the region including Zamfara State. In another related study is that of Uwakwe *et al.* (2025) reported that inadequate school security measures and the increasing incidence of banditry and insurgency have exposed secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria to security threats, thereby undermining the quality of education. Furthermore, Okafor *et al.* (2025) affirmed that the level of insecurity was found at a high extent and it has affected teaching and learning in secondary schools in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State to a high extent.

Based on the foregoing discussions in this study, it could be said that security in rural public secondary schools in Zamfara state have continued to be a major challenge especially, its negative implication on the development of effective school administration and quality education.

Conclusion

This study was conducted on the assessment of the level of insecurity in rural public schools in Gusau Education Zone, Zamfara State. The study found that there was a moderate extent of insecurity in the area of the study. The study concluded that insecurity poses a substantial threat to the effective management of rural public secondary schools and has the potential to adversely affect educational management processes and practices, such as effective school administration and leadership, consistent school supervision, effective educational planning, excellently proper implementation of the curriculum contents, conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning of instructions, attractive school environment, adequate collaboration between schools principals and patents, staff morale, and students' learning outcomes if not adequately addressed.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following:

1. The Zamfara State government should provide viable ways to strengthen collaboration among school administrators, security agencies, host communities, and School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) to establish community-based security mechanisms for early detection and prompt response to security threats affecting schools.
2. The government should establish functional counselling and psychosocial support services for teachers, students, and parents to reduce fear and anxiety associated with insecurity and to promote a safe, supportive, and conducive learning environment.
3. School administrators should integrate security management into school development plans by strengthening access control measures, improving school security infrastructure, and conducting periodic security risk assessments to safeguard students, staff, and school facilities.
4. Educational managers should strengthen collaborative governance by fostering effective partnerships among schools, School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs), parents, community leaders, and relevant stakeholders to support the implementation of sustainable school safety initiatives.
5. The Principals should establish functional school safety committees responsible for coordinating security awareness programmes, emergency preparedness activities, and regular monitoring of potential security risks within the school environment.

Acknowledgements

This research work was fully sponsored by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) through its model of Institution Based Research (IBR) Grant. The sponsorship was accessed and secured through the Centre for Research and Development, Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State, Nigeria, as the hosting research institution.

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