

# Strengthening School Effectiveness through Safety Measures and Quality Assurance Mechanisms in Insecurity-Prone Zamfara State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

School effectiveness is a crucial determinant of educational quality and national development. However, the increasing insecurity in Nigeria has posed significant challenges to the safety and functionality of schools, disrupting teaching and learning processes, diminishing student performance, and undermining teachers' commitment. The escalating threats of attacks on schools, abductions, and violence have created an urgent need to strengthen safety measures to safeguard the educational environment and enhance institutional resilience. This paper explores how robust safety measures contribute to improving school effectiveness amid insecurity, with a focus on their implications for educational quality assurance in reference with Zamfara State, northwest Nigeria. Effective safety strategies, such as infrastructural security enhancements, psychological support systems, crisis response mechanisms, and multi-stakeholder collaboration, play a fundamental role in ensuring a conducive learning environment. These measures not only protect lives but also create stability, fostering an atmosphere where teachers can perform effectively and students can achieve optimal learning outcomes. The paper argues that integrating security measures into the broader educational quality assurance framework reinforces institutional accountability, promotes policy adherence, and enhances the overall performance of schools. Furthermore, this study underscores the critical roles of educational stakeholders, including policymakers, school administrators, teachers, parents, and security agencies, in sustaining a secure and effective school system. Strengthening school safety requires proactive interventions, well-defined policies, and strategic partnerships to mitigate the adverse effects of insecurity on education. By prioritizing safety within the quality assurance framework, educational institutions can enhance their effectiveness, ensuring sustainable academic excellence and institutional stability in Zamfara State.

## Keywords

Education, Insecurity, School Effectiveness, Safety Measures, Insecurity, Education Quality Assurance

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Education plays a significant role in human and national development. The quality of education offered at every level of education determines to a great extent the quality of the students' turnout in the system. Quality assurance is therefore, imperative for school to be effective in order to achieve its intended goals and objectives. It is therefore, imperative for schools to have a mechanism that will sustain the set standards in schools and ensure continuous quality of education. These quality assurance variables ensure that school activities are done in line towards achievement of educational goals [1]. School is an organization where an individual grows up with development of both personal and social aspects. It provides optimum learning environment where cognitive, emotional, psychomotor, social and aesthetic developments of a child take place. It is therefore essential for school to be effective for the proper achievement of teaching and learning processes concurrently. [2] opined that a school is considered effective when it consistently improves its success history through teachers, principals and students' attitudes to a superlative performance. On this ground, it could be observed that effective school is multi-dimensional and a complex concept. It has several features. Relating these features one can find the stand point of a school. One of such features there exist the creation of a conducive school climate atmosphere under which school safety lies. According to [3], school safety is becoming a major issue in today's society. With the increasing trend of uncertainties in school, there is a need of carrying out a study to test for the relationship of violence and anger and providing the necessary recommendations on the strategies and preventive measures. Schools are dealing with threats including bomb threats, school violence, and weapons. Deducively, safety within schools is a major problem affecting students, teachers, and the community all over the world. Most of the schools have tried coming up with measures to ensure that students and the faculty as whole feel safe while in school [4].

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Zamfara state (as the geographical area of this study) Zamfara state has been one of the most educationally disadvantaged states in Nigeria. Empirically, it was observed that Zamfara has been among the top Nigerian states that have been encountering numerous challenges associated with hazardous educational environments, which jeopardize the long-term viability of educational institutions and significantly contribute to the decline in the quality of education within the state. Such problems include inadequate school infrastructural facilities, lack of teachers' motivation which may lead lack of commitment among the teachers, as well as insecurity motives of banditry, and violent attacks of public schools' environment which threatening the lives and well-being of students and school personnel [5]. In light of such circumstances, following the widespread incidents of assaults and the abduction of numerous students within Zamfara State, on September 1, 2021, the government of Zamfara, in collaboration with the Nigeria Police Force, initiated and executed a comprehensive closure of all public educational institutions throughout the fourteen local government areas of the state for an extended duration [6]. Thereafter, following a systematic and strategic limited resumption of certain schools within the state, by August 2022, a cumulative total of 75 public secondary schools remained closed since 2021 due to concerns regarding environmental safety [7]. Unfortunately, the number of the government-owned public schools closed in Zamfara state between 2021 and December 2023 rose from 75 to 168 schools [8]. A recent revelation by the Zamfara State Ministry of education alerted that the problems of unsafe school environment persists and requires timely maximum efforts to rescue the public schools and all educational institutions from total destruction [9]. However, [10] 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 strategies the process of the reopening of the affected schools. Thus, the problems of safe school environment and teachers' commitment still persist among educational institutions in Zamfara State. Vividly, there are so many security challenges in the schools, both secondary and universities researchers have identified series of causes of insecurity in our schools and this has resulted to dysfunctional consequences in our school system. In some regions, schools are out rightly closed for fear of the students being kidnapped or gruesomely bombed by terrorist [11]. Numerous research investigations were conducted on the nature of the unsafe activities in public schools. However, only few and limited researches were conducted on the integration of school safety measures in educational quality assurance for enhancing the level of school effectiveness. To fill this literature gap, this study attempts to examine the integration of school safety measures in educational quality assurance mechanisms for enhancing school effectiveness in Zamfara state, Nigeria.

## 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to analyse the techniques of strengthening school effectiveness through safety measures in the context of insecurity with implications for educational quality assurance in Zamfara State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- To examine the techniques of strengthening school effectiveness through safety measures in the context of insecurity in Zamfara State.
- To explore the implications of quality assurance in strengthening school effectiveness through school safety measures in Zamfara State.

## 1.4 Research Questions

This study tends to provide a tentative answers to the following research questions:

- What are the techniques of strengthening school effectiveness through safety measures in the context of insecurity in Zamfara State?
- What are the implications of quality assurance in strengthening school effectiveness through school safety measures in Zamfara State?

## 2. Conceptual Perspectives

In the context of this paper, three research variables are considered towards the achievement of the objectives of the study, they are: school effectiveness, insecurity, school safety and education quality assurance.

### 2.1 Concept of School Effectiveness

School effectiveness refers to the capacity of a school to achieve desirable educational outcomes through efficient leadership, quality teaching, adequate learning resources, and a positive school climate [12]. According to [13], school effectiveness is viewed as the level to which school is able to accomplish its objectives of strong instructional leadership, clear and focused mission, safe and orderly environment, high expectations for success, frequent monitoring of student progress, opportunity to learn and time on task and positive home school relations. An effective school fosters high academic achievement, strong teacher-student relationships, and a well-managed institutional structure [14].

### 2.2 Concept of Insecurity

Insecurity refers to a flexible state of condition that encapsulates the relative capacity of a state to address threats to its fundamental values and interests, with the primary beneficiaries being the populace [15]. According to [16], insecurity

signifies a state or condition within a social unit, system, organization, or society wherein the presence of a problem attains a critical magnitude such that the survival or continuity of the social system or structure is jeopardized. Based on the existing literature, insecurity may be conceptualized as an advanced stage of conflict, encompassing threats to human security and severe violence typified by combat, fatalities, injuries, and related phenomena. Abraham Maslow [15] articulated that an individual experiencing insecurity perceives the world as a perilous jungle, feels unsafe, discontented, ostracized, hostile, pessimistic, exhibits signs of tension, conflict, and guilt, and tends to manifest neurotic tendencies and a predominantly egocentric disposition. Insecurity engenders fear [17]. This denotes a certain degree of apprehension, concern regarding threats to life and property, and conveys a circumstance of anxiety and discomfort. According to [18], insecurity is characterized as a sensation of uncertainty, a deficiency in self-confidence, or anxiety concerning oneself. It can further be characterized as the condition of being susceptible to danger or threat [19]. The insecurity affecting lives has significantly diminished the life expectancy of individuals and imposed severe hardships upon the citizens of this nation, particularly resulting in the displacement of certain populations, notably in the northern region of Nigeria as an independent country [20].

### **2.3 Impact of Insecurity on School Effectiveness among Public Schools in Nigeria**

Analytically, in areas plagued by insecurity, such as Zamfara State, school effectiveness is severely compromised, with multiple negative effects on educational delivery. Frequent attacks on schools force institutions to shut down temporarily or permanently, disrupting teaching, learning, and proper curriculum implementation [21]. Constant exposure to violence causes fear, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among students and teachers, which reduces concentration, academic engagement, and teacher productivity [22]. Many teachers refuse postings to insecure areas, while those already in affected regions leave their jobs due to safety concerns, resulting in workforce shortages and declining instructional quality [23]. Parents, particularly of girls who face higher risks of abduction, hesitate to enroll their children in unsafe schools, leading to declining enrollment and increased dropout rates [24]. Attacks also destroy vital infrastructure such as classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and other facilities, further crippling the education sector [25]. Moreover, constant security threats undermine institutional management, as administrators struggle to maintain order, enforce discipline, and engage in effective educational planning [26].

### **2.4 Concept of School Safety**

According to [27], school safety refers to actions taken by the students, teachers, and other school functionaries fosters order to reduce or guide against dangerous and hazardous situations that may result in misadventure, damage to, or loss of any part of the body. It is therefore, an important factor in the attainment of effective teaching and learning [28]. A safe school is one in which the total school climate allows students, teachers, administrators, staff, and visitors to interact in a positive, non-threatening manner that reflects the educational mission of the school while fostering positive relationships and personal growth [29]. In other words, a is one that fosters peaceful, positive or cordial relationships among students, teachers and administrators [30]. A safe school according to [31], a safe school is an environment that is free from danger and possible harm, where non educators, educators and learners can work, teach and learn without fear or ridicule, intimidation, harassment, humiliation or violence. According to [32], school safety encompasses the establishment of a secure environment for students, extending from their residences to educational institutions and back. This encompasses protection from various forms of maltreatment, violence, psychosocial challenges, as well as disasters, whether they are natural or anthropogenic, including fire hazards and transportation risks. In an environment characterized by safety, learners, educators, and other personnel are afforded the opportunity to engage and pursue their pedagogical and learning endeavors without the apprehension of unforeseen threats. A secure educational institution prioritizes the mitigation of internal risks, specifically those originating within the school premises.

### **2.5 Key Dimensions of School Safety for Effective Implementation of Safety Measures**

School safety is a fundamental aspect of educational administration. A safe school environment is not only conducive to learning but also essential for the overall well-being of students and staff. educational administrators, government and other relevant educational authorities are therefore responsible in orchestrating efforts to maintain and enhance safety within schools. Their responsibilities encompass a wide range of activities, from ensuring physical security to fostering a positive school climate. The following of the key dimensions of school safety in the context of this paper:

#### **2.5.1 Physical Safety**

Physical safety refers specifically to the tangible, structural dimensions of safety within school settings. It emphasizes the physical elements that protect students and staff from harm, such as secured access points, proper lighting, supervised hallways, and environmental design features that discourage unauthorized entry or unsafe behavior [33].

#### **2.5.2 Psychological Safety**

Psychological safety focus on the well-being of children and staff by promoting school climate and connectedness. The formation of school safety coordination teams needs coordination between school personnel, emergency management responders, and community resources. Crisis plans outline roles and duties for the school crisis team as well as protocols and processes for an effective response [33].

### 3. Strengthening School Safety Measures in The Context of Insecurity

To ensure school effectiveness despite security challenges, proactive safety measures must be put in place to protect students, teachers, and school facilities. The following strategies are essential in strengthening school security in Zamfara State as highlighted by [34] and [35]:

#### 3.1 Infrastructural Safety and Security Enhancements

Based on the existing related literature in the conduct of this study, it was observed that, securing school premises through physical safety measures is a fundamental step in protecting schools from potential safety and security threats. These measures include:

- **Perimeter Fencing:** Schools should be enclosed with high, fortified fences to prevent unauthorized access. Barbed wires and reinforced gates can enhance protection [35].
- **Security Gates and Checkpoints:** Entry points should be monitored by trained security personnel to control movement in and out of the school [36].
- **Surveillance Systems:** CCTV cameras should be installed in strategic locations to monitor school premises and detect suspicious activities [37].
- **Emergency Alarm Systems:** Schools should have alarm systems that can alert authorities and staff in case of an attack or -security breach [37].

#### 3.2 Strengthening School Security Personnel

According to [34], deploying trained security personnel to schools can significantly enhance safety. This can be achieved through:

- **Collaboration with Local Security Agencies:** Schools should establish partnerships with police, civil defense forces, and vigilante groups for rapid response in case of security threats [38].
- **Recruitment of Professionally Trained Guards:** Schools should employ trained security guards to patrol school premises and deter intruders [36].
- **Use of School-Based Security Task Forces:** Selected teachers and community volunteers can be trained to assist in surveillance and emergency response efforts [39].

#### 3.3 Crisis Response and Emergency Management Plans

To minimize the impact of security threats, schools must have comprehensive crisis management strategies, including:

- **Developing School Safety Policies:** Each school should have a security policy detailing response procedures in case of an attack [38].
- **Conducting Regular Safety Drills:** Teachers and students should be trained on how to respond to emergencies such as kidnappings, armed attacks, and fire outbreaks [34].
- **Establishing Communication Networks:** Schools should have emergency communication lines linked to security agencies for swift intervention when needed [38].

#### 3.4 Psychological and Emotional Support for Students and Teachers

The psychological impact of insecurity on students and teachers cannot be overlooked. Providing emotional support and counseling services is essential in ensuring their well-being. According to [40], the measures include the following:

- **Deployment of School Counselors:** Professional counselors should be available to provide therapy and support to trauma-affected students and staff.
- **Organizing Trauma Healing Programs:** Schools should conduct workshops and support groups to help students and teachers recover from distress caused by insecurity.
- **Implementing Peer Support Networks:** Encouraging students to support one another through structured peer counseling programs can foster resilience and emotional well-being.

#### 3.5 Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration in School Safety

School security cannot be addressed in isolation; according to [40], it requires collaboration among multiple stakeholders, including:

- **Government Intervention:** Authorities must provide funding for school security initiatives and enforce policies that protect educational institutions.

- **Community Involvement:** Local communities should actively participate in safeguarding schools by reporting suspicious activities and supporting school security initiatives.
- **Parental Engagement:** Parents should be involved in safety planning, attending security meetings, and educating their children on personal safety measures.

### 3.6 Safe Schools Declaration and Policy Implementation

The Nigerian government has adopted the Safe Schools Declaration, an international commitment to protecting education from attack [41]. Full implementation of such policy in Nigerian public schools requires:

- **Increased Budgetary Allocation for School Security:** Adequate funding should be provided to implement security measures across schools.
- **Enforcement of Strict Legal Penalties for School Attacks:** Perpetrators of school violence should face strict legal consequences to deter future attacks.
- **Integration of Safety Education in School Curricula:** Students should be taught safety measures, emergency response tactics, and conflict resolution skills.

### 3.7 Concept of Education Quality Assurance

According to [42], quality assurance in education is a proactive means of ensuring quality of inputs, teaching-learning processes, learning environment and consequent enhance school effectiveness. In a related study conducted by [43], observed that ensuring quality in the factors such as curriculum, instructional materials, equipment, school management, teacher capacity building and physical resources are part of the strategies for achieving school effectiveness. Furthermore, [44] opined that working towards integrating quality assurance to teachers, supervision, school monitoring, school facilities and location helps in realising school effectiveness, in term of students' academic performance. Quality assurance in education aims to prevent quality problems and ensure that the products of the system meet expected standards. The Federal Ministry of Education as detailed in [45] described quality assurance as systems and procedures designed to ensure that activities at the various levels of the Nigerian education system are being carried out according to set standards and to monitor, evaluate and improve performance. [46] stated that the concept of quality assurance in the education system he views from two perspectives: an internal point of view (within the system) and an external measure (controlled by the regulatory authority). According to [47], the concept of quality in education is the concept of overall quality inputs and outputs in education. Quality is considered a fundamental criterion in education and can be measured on the basis of preference scales, i.e specified standards and quality indicators. Standards here refer to accepted principles, rules, guidelines, or levels established by a group of people, organizations, or societies.

## 4. Implications of Strengthening School Effectiveness through School Safety Measures for Educational Quality Assurance

### 4.1 Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

Regular assessment of school security policies should be incorporated into quality assurance frameworks. Schools should undergo periodic safety audits to ensure compliance with security standards [48].

### 4.2 Integration of Security in School Quality Standards

Educational institutions should include safety measures in their accreditation requirements. Schools that fail to meet security benchmarks should be mandated to improve their safety infrastructure [49].

### 4.3 Capacity Building for Teachers and School Administrators

Teachers and school leaders should receive continuous training on crisis management, conflict resolution, and emergency preparedness to enhance institutional resilience [50].

### 4.4 Policy Advocacy and Government Intervention

Government agencies should enforce school safety policies and ensure that schools receive adequate security resources. Collaboration with international organizations can also enhance security efforts [51].

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

This paper examined the techniques of strengthening school effectiveness through safety measures in the context of insecurity with implications for educational quality assurance in Zamfara State, Nigeria. The paper argued that integrating security measures into the broader educational quality assurance framework reinforces institutional accountability, promotes policy adherence, and enhances the overall performance of schools. Furthermore, this study underscores the critical roles of educational stakeholders, including policymakers, school administrators, teachers, parents, and security agencies, in sustaining a secure and effective school system. Strengthening school safety requires proactive interventions, well-defined policies, and strategic partnerships to mitigate the adverse effects of insecurity on

education. By prioritizing safety within the quality assurance framework, educational institutions can enhance their effectiveness, ensuring sustainable academic excellence and institutional stability in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Based on findings, this paper recommendations are made:

- The government should provide adequate safety equipment and facilities in all public schools, including the deployment of security personnel, installation of metal detectors, construction of firmly tall perimeter fences with gates, and the establishment of a central security alarm system. This is particularly important given that most of these colleges serve as residential institutions for both students and staff.
- School administrators should formulate and implement safe school environment policies and action plans tailored to the unique safety needs of their respective schools, taking into account the geographical variations that exist between different institutions.
- To consistently enhance school safety, school administrators should conduct periodic emergency drills, train staff and students on safety protocols, and establish clear evacuation and response plans for various safety threats.
- The government should allocate more resources for school security, including training for school administrators, deployment of adequate security personnel, and provision of safety infrastructural facilities.

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