

**CRIMINALITY AND INSECURITY IN NIGERIA: EFFECT ON SECONDARY
SCHOOL STUDENTS' AWARENESS IN AKWA IBOM STATE**

By

**Effiong Thompson
Department of Political Science
College of Education, Afaha Nsit,
Akwa Ibom State**

And

**Inyang Etim Inyang
Department of Political Science
College of Education, Afaha Nsit,
Akwa Ibom State.**

ABSTRACT

The study investigated criminality and insecurity in Nigeria: effect on secondary school students' awareness in Akwa Ibom State. Four research questions as well as four corresponding hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study consisted of all the twelve thousand, one hundred and two (12,102) SS2 students in the two hundred and forty-three (243) public secondary schools in the State. A multi stage procedure including stratified purposive and simple random sampling technique was used in selecting six hundred (600) SS2 students from thirty (30) public secondary schools in the area under study. A 17-item questionnaire titled Effect and Awareness of Criminality and Insecurity in Secondary Schools in Nigeria Questionnaire (EACISSNQ) was used in the collection of data. The instrument was validated by three (3) experts in Measurement and Evaluation. A reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained using cronbach alpha reliability test. This showed that the instrument was reliable. Research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation while hypotheses were analyzed using chi-square statistics. The findings of the study reveal that criminality and insecurity affected secondary school students' academic performance negatively. It also revealed that secondary school students are aware of the problem as well as the safety measures to observe while in school, finally, the study revealed that secondary school students are aware of the possible remedies to criminality and insecurity in schools. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that perimeter fencing should be provided in secondary schools, well-trained security personnel should be employed to secure the schools and secondary school students should be taught security studies.

KEYWORDS: Criminality, Insecurity, Awareness



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INTRODUCTION

At independence in 1960, the pre-colonial norms and values of Nigeria which associate indolent and lazy people with criminal tendencies such as stealing and witchcrafts (Mbon 2004) were already fast eroding due to colonial penetration prior to colonial infiltration of Nigeria, individuals and communities had enough resources for their nuclear families (Hallgren, 1995). Social justice was greatly prized and encouraged in Nigerian society such that, individuals or groups known or even suspected to have acted or behaved unjustly were quickly punished by the community, however colonialism changed all that. Thus as Nigeria and indeed other Africans started to trade with the Europeans, first on slaves and later on legitimate goods and amassing huge private fortunes from them and imbibing their western education and way of life. Traditional African values started to erode, western culture of wealth acquisition in European currency and goods instead of in agricultural products that was popular in traditional society were gradually embraced (Nwosu & Kalu, 1978). Big money went into few hands and greatly sharpened the gulf between the rich and the poor. The society was divided into have and have not with barrier created to separate them. They have lived in exquisite world of opportunities and privileges basked in prosperity while the have-not became the hewers of wood and drawers of water with the temptation to be involved in crime as an option (Agbese, 1985). Since the society creates the road to the top- legal and illegal, some people choose the illegal route which is shorter but strewn with danger along its path.

It is against this background that, we understand the deterioration of the security level at independence whereby Nigerians were harassed by high-way robbers and petty thieves of that time up to the current state of siege in all parts of Nigeria caused by kidnapping, terrorism and banditry. According to Akinrinade (1985;17), the first type of armed criminality in Nigeria were lone gunmen (high-way robbers) who laid ambush for unsuspecting travelers in lonely roads leading to big cities mostly at night and were usually hooded. Initially, cases were few and were around few big cities of that time.

Similarly, thieves of that time broke into homes to steal only when occupants were absent. Later, they became more desperate and started going out in bands for bigger operations on roads and homes. Subsequent political crisis of that era caused by ethically-minded political leaders and their political parties made the use of violence among criminals to be imbibed by the general public. They were; violent western crises of 1962, regional government repression of minority agitation in the north and east that resulted in riots and unrest in the COR area -1964 respectively, controversial census result in 1963, the rigged general election of 1964, and the rigged western regional election of 1965. The political upheavals did not only extend the culture of violence to the citizenry but also introduced fire arms to the public for the first time in Nigeria's history.

Insecurity in Nigeria involving Boko Haram terrorist suicide bombing and killings in the North-East; banditry and kidnapping activities in North-west; killer herdsmen massacres in the North-central; armed robbery, river/sea piracy, kidnapping and crude oil theft}pipeline vandalization in the South-south; secessionist killings from IPOB in the South-east and the Yoruba nation self-determination campaign of Sunday Igboho in the South-west regions have not only disrupted the peaceful atmosphere in all parts of Nigeria but have also adversely affected all facets of the Nigeria society. This volatile situation has persisted and grown worst by the day since early 2000 when Niger Delta militants first launched their pipeline bombing and kidnapping campaigns to register their grievances and discontents against government policies in their religion. In the report of a study carried out between July, 2009 and 2022 by Armed Conflict Location and Events Data Project, Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP) terrorist's groups alone carried out not less than 1,480 terrorist attacks in different parts of Nigeria resulting

in the death of about 15,111 victims and the displacement of 3.2 million Nigerians (Odeniyi, 2022: 18).

A similar data compiled by Onime (2018:384) shows that the year 2000 and 2013, the total number of kidnapping cases was 6,059 with year 2009 and the year 2010 topping the list with 703 and 738 cases respectively. The same report shows that in the same period the total number of Nigerians assassinated were 65,989. In this category, 1,255 persons were involved in the year 2000. Thereafter, it increased by 1,259 to 2,550 in the year 2004 until it got to an all-time high of 38,955 persons in the year 2009 before it started to reduce erratically to 3,143 victims by the year 2013. According to Onime, these cases also include very high profile politically-motivated killings which the police could not unravel the murderers such as Chief Bola Ige (2001), Sunday Awomyi (2002), Marshal Harry (2003), Ogbonnaya Uche (2003), Aminosari Dikibo (2004), Funsho William (2006), Ayo Daramola (2006), Dipo Dina (2010), among others. Insecurity also destroyed the nation's critical assets such as crude oil pipelines in the Niger Delta region. For example, in the four-year period between 2010 and 2013, the following pipeline vandalization cases occurred: 2010 (836 cases), (Onime, 2018:386). This resulted in millions of naira loss of revenue to the country.

Apart from the 30-month Civil War, the 14-year-old terrorist and insurgency crisis is the most serious national challenge that have brought not only world negative attention to Nigeria but also threatened the survival of Nigeria as an indivisible country. Scrambling over each other to explain how Nigeria became entangled in the insecurity web, policy makers, scholars, politicians and even ordinary Nigerians generated plethora of views on what government policies or lack of it was responsible for insecurity in Nigeria. In view of the widespread level of criminality and insecurity and the danger they pose to all Nigerians most especially students who can be identified in specific locations, there is need to appraise the extent of their understanding of the enormity of the problem and how they can avoid being made victims within and outside their school compounds,

Statement of the problem

Criminality and insecurity have remained a critical issue of great concern for many nations of the world. No nation or society can boast of being completely free from the problem ensued by criminality and Insecurity. In Nigeria, the issue of security has occupied center stage, since the country's return to democracy in 1999. On daily basis, the media has continued to highlight and discuss the incessant cases of security threats, ranging from communal clashes, youth unrest, religious extremism, election violence, ethno religious violence, terrorism, insurgency, cattle rustling, suicide bombing, armed robbery, kidnapping, riots and other forms of social vices which plague and threaten the socio-political and economic survival of Nigeria as a democratic state.

Schools are not left out of these happenings. It is a well-known fact that, insecurity has affected many schools in Northern Nigeria. Since schools have become easy targets for kidnapping, there is the need to create awareness and educate the students of Akwa Ibom state secondary school system on safety measures to be adopted to remain safe in their school environment.

Objectives of the study

The main objectives of this study was to investigate criminality and insecurity in Nigeria: effect on secondary school students' awareness in Akwa Ibom State
Specifically, this study sought to:

- i. examine the extent to which secondary school students are affected by criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State;
- ii. determine the level to which secondary school students are aware of the problem of criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom;
- iii. assess the extent to which secondary school students are aware of the safety measures to observe in order to keep themselves safe in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State;
- iv. examine the possible remedies to criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study

- i. To what extent are secondary school students' affected by criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?
- ii. What is the level of secondary school students' awareness of the problem of criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?
- iii. To what extent are secondary school students' aware of safety measures to observe in order to keep themselves safe in secondary schools in Akwa ibom State?
- iv. What are the possible remedies to criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study;

- H₀₁** Secondary school students' are not significantly affected by criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State
- H₀₂** Secondary school students' are not significantly aware of the problem of criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State
- H₀₃** Secondary school students' are not significantly aware of safety measures to observe in order to keep themselves safe in secondary schools in Akwa ibom State
- H₀₄** There are no significant possible remedies to criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. Study was conducted in the three senatorial Districts of Akwa Ibom State. The population of the study consisted of all the twelve thousand, one hundred and two (12,102) SS2 students in the two hundred and forty-three (243) public secondary schools in the State. A total of one thousand two hundred (1200) in the study area, using multi-stage sampling technique would part in the study. This means that four hundred students were selected from each of the senatorial zones of the State. A 17-item questionnaire titled *Effect and Awareness of Criminality and Insecurity in Secondary Schools in Nigeria Questionnaire* (EACISSNQ) was used in the collection of data. The instrument for data collection was validated by three experts in Measurement and Evaluation from three Universities, their expert comment, correction and modification were incorporated into the final copy of the instrument. In order to ensure the reliability of the instrument, twenty copies of the instrument were administered on twenty students in secondary schools that did not form part of the research. The instrument was subjected to Cronbach alpha reliability test, a reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained which shows that the instrument was reliable. The researchers obtained permission from the principals

before administering the instrument directly to the respondents in the selected secondary schools with the help of two research assistants who were trained in what is required. Research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Consequently, a mean score of <2.50 showed that the respondents agreed to the item, while a mean score of < 2.49 showed that the respondents disagreed with the item. Chi-square statistics was used for testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1

To what extent are secondary school students affected by criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 1 Mean and standard deviation on the extent to which secondary school students are affected by criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Items	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1. I am always afraid to come to school whenever there is crisis in the school community.	2.78	1.1	Agreed
2. Staying away from school as a result of crisis on the school community affects my academic performance negatively.	2.93	1.44	Agreed
3. I do not always feel secured in school	2.73	1.34	Agreed
4. I am always afraid when I see strangers around my school environment.	3.00	1.90	Agreed
Grand Mean	2.86		Agreed

Table 1 above shows that students agreed with items 1, 2, 3 and 4 with mean scores of 2.78, 2.93, 2.73 and 3.00 respectively. This indicates that students are to a large extent affected by criminality and insecurity in the schools. Consequently, the grand mean of 2.86 shows that secondary school students are to a large extent affected by criminality and insecurity in schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Question 2

What is the level of secondary school students' awareness of the problem of criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 2 Mean and standard deviation on the level of secondary school students' awareness of the problems of criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Items	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
5. Criminality and insecurity brings fear.	3.35	1.21	Agreed
6. Criminality and insecurity causes students not to concentrate in the class.	3.47	1.55	Agreed
7. Criminality and insecurity causes teachers to stay away from school.	3.58	0.14	Agreed
8. Criminality and insecurity causes truancy in school.	3.44	1.77	Agreed
9. Criminality and insecurity causes lateness to school.	3.86	1.71	Agreed

Grand Mean	3.32	Agreed
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Table 2 above shows that students agreed with items 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 with mean scores of 3.25, 3.47, 3.58, 3.44 and 3.88 respectively. This shows that students are to a large extent aware of the problems of criminality and insecurity in the school. Consequently, the grand mean of 3.32 shows that secondary school students are to a large extent aware of the problems of criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Question 3

To what extent are secondary school students aware of safety measures to observe in order to keep themselves safe in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 3 Mean and standard deviation on the extent to which secondary school students are aware of safety awareness to observe in order to keep themselves safe in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Items	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
10. I always go home from school in groups	3.77	1.87	Agreed
11. I go to school from home in groups.	3.54	1.65	Agreed
12. I do not leave the school premises till the close of school.	3.44	1.54	Agreed
13. I lock my properties inside the locker before leaving the class during break-time.	3.21	1.48	Agreed
Grand Mean	3.32		Agreed

Table 3 above shows that students agreed with items 10, 11, 12 and 13 with mean score of 3.77, 3.54, 3.44 and 3.21 respectively. These indicate that students are to a large extent aware of the safety measures to observe in order to keep themselves safe in the schools. Consequently, the grand mean of 3.49 shows that secondary school students are to a large extent aware of safety measures to observe in order to keep themselves safe in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Question 4

What are the possible remedies to criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 4 Mean and standard deviation on the possible remedies to criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Items	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
14. Perimeter fencing will help curb insecurity and criminality.	3.88	1.61	Agreed
15. Availability of enough security personnel in school will help curb criminality and insecurity.	3.64	1.57	Agreed
16. Security agencies should be adequately equipped so as to respond to any emergency security challenge in the schools.	3.61	1.56	Agreed

17	Communities should form security groups to guard the schools within their communities.	2.51	1.31	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.41		Agreed

Table 4 above shows that students agreed with items 14, 15, 16 and 17 with mean scores of 3.88, 3.64, 3.61 and 2.51 respectively. These shows that students are to a large extent are aware of the possible remedies of criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Hypotheses

H₀₁ Secondary School students are not significantly affected by criminality and insecurity in Secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 5 Chi-Square table on the extent to which secondary school students are significantly affected by criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

O	E	O - E	$(O - E)^2$	$\frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$	Level of Sig.	X^2 cal	X^2 crit	df	Decision
768	771	-3	9	0.01					
553	561	-8	64	0.11					
140	146	-6	36	0.25	0.05	13.50	3.48	1	Rejected
39	22	17	289	13.13					
$X^2 = 13.50$									

Table 5 above show that the X^2 calculated value of 13.50 is greater than the X^2 critical table value of 3.48 at 0.05 level of significance with a degree of freedom of 1. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows that secondary school students are significantly affected by criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

H₀₂ Secondary school students are not significantly aware of the problem of criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 6 Chi-Square table on the extent to which school students are significantly aware of the problem of criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

O	E	O - E	$(O - E)^2$	$\frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$	Level of Sig.	X^2 cal	X^2 crit	df	Decision
776	786	-10	100	0.13					
537	549	-12	144	0.30					
153	140	13	169	1.21	0.05	4.88	3.48	1	Rejected
34	25	9	81	3.24					
$X^2 = 4.88$									

Table 6 above shows that the X^2 calculated value of 4.88 is greater than the X^2 critical table value of 3.48 at 0.05 level of significance with a degree of freedom of 1. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows that secondary school students are significantly aware of the problem of criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

H₀₃ Secondary school students are not significantly aware of safety measures to observe in order to keep themselves safe in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 7 Chi-Square table on the extent to which secondary school students are significantly aware of the safety measures to observe in order to keep themselves safe in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

O	E	O – E	$(O - E)^2$	$\frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$	Level of Sig.	X^2 cal	X^2 crit	df	Decision
693	684	9	81	0.12					
547	529	18	324	0.61					
190	181	9	81	0.44	0.05	13.39	3.48	1	Rejected
70	106	-36	1296	12.22					
$X^2 = 13.39$									

Table 7 above shows that the X^2 calculated value of 13.39 is greater than the X^2 critical table value of 3.48 at 0.05 level of significance with a degree of freedom of 1. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows that secondary school students are significantly aware of the safety measures to observe in order to keep themselves safe in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Ho4 There are no significant possible remedies to criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 8 Chi-Square table on the significant possible remedies to criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

O	E	O – E	$(O - E)^2$	$\frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$	Level of Sig.	X^2 cal	X^2 crit	df	Decision
724	711	13	196	0.27					
531	569	-38	144	2.53					
171	196	-25	625	3.18	0.05	10.14	3.48	1	Rejected
74	24	10	100	4.16					
$X^2 = 10.14$									

Table 8 above shows that the X^2 calculated value of 10.14 is greater than the X^2 critical table value of 3.48 at 0.05 level of significance with a degree of freedom of 1. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows that there are significant possible remedies to criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Discussion of Findings

Findings in research question one reveals that secondary school students are affected by criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State in the following ways among others; students are afraid to come to school whenever there is crisis in the school community and students also stayed away from school as a result of the crisis in the school community which affects students' academic performance negatively. This is in agreement with Ojukwu (2017) who submitted that schools that are not well secured who suffer from insecurity creates situations where students are afraid and cannot learn thereby leading to poor academic performance.

Findings in research question two reveals that secondary school students are aware of the problems of criminality and insecurity in Akwa Ibom State in the following ways among others; criminality and insecurity caused fear in school; it causes students not to concentrate in class and causes teacher to stay away from school. This in consonance with Ojukwu and Nwanna (2015)

who said that as a result of insecurity in school teachers especially female teachers stay away from school thereby affecting students' academic performance negatively.

Findings in research question three reveals that secondary school students are aware of the safety measures to observe in order to keep themselves safe in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State in the following ways among others; students do not leave the school premises till the close of school and students lock their properties inside the locker before leaving the class during break-time. This is in agreement with Alimba (2018) who acknowledged that some of the physical security measures to be adopted in school are the use of fences, locks and keys, safe and strong rooms burglary proof among others.

Findings in research question four reveals that students are aware of the possible remedies to criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State in the following ways among others; perimeter fencing, availability of adequate security agencies to respond to any emergency security challenge in the school. This is in consonance with Ndlova and Mabunda (2018) who submitted that safety measures such as presence of trained safety officers contribute significantly to reducing incidence of violence and creating a conducive learning environment.

Findings in hypothesis one reveals that secondary school students are significantly affected by criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. This is alluded to by Ojukwu (2017) who opined that as a result of insecure school environment, students are afraid and feel insecure, skip school, miss certain lessons which affect them during examination. Besides, they lose interest in school and academic activities which leads to truancy.

Findings in hypothesis two reveals that secondary school students are significantly aware of the problem of criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. This is in agreement with Ojukwu and Nwanna (2015) who reported that as a result of insecurity in the school environment, sometimes female staff and students complain of being raped or impregnated leading to their being dropped out of school.

Findings in hypothesis three reveals that secondary school students are significantly aware of safety measure to observe in order to keep themselves safe in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. This is in consonance with Uwazurike (2019) and Okene (2021) who stated that security post is very necessary in preventing strangers from getting access to the school environment freely. This is true because the provision of fence, locks and keys among others will to a large extent prevent criminals from invading the school.

Findings in hypothesis four reveals that there are no significant possible remedies to criminality and insecurity in secondary school in Akwa Ibom State. This is in agreement with Worlu and Okai (2024) who submit that the presence of security personnel, emergency preparedness measures and psychological support systems are all positively and significantly correlated with student learning outcome. This is true because the provision of adequate security in school helps in ensuring a peaceful atmosphere that enhances effective teaching and learning in schools.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that criminality an insecurity affected secondary school students' academic performance negatively, it also concludes that secondary school students are aware of the problem of criminality and insecurity, the study further concluded that secondary school students are aware of safety measures to observe while in school and finally, the study concluded that secondary school students are aware of ways to remedy criminality and insecurity in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Base on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Government should ensure to provide perimeter fencing in all the secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.
- ii. Adequate and well-trained security personnel should be employed to secure the schools.
- iii. Secondary school students should be taught security studies to help them become security conscious.
- iv. Security agencies should be properly trained to be alert to provide security response in school at any time such security challenge arises.
- v. Communities should form vigilante groups to also provide security for their schools.

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