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PARENTS' AND SCHOOL HEADS' PERCEPTION OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL SECURITY STRATEGIES IN UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION SCHOOLS IN ILORIN, KWARA STATE

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Abstract

The study adopted the survey method of research to find out effective school security strategies as identified by parents and school heads. Two hundred (200) parents and 200 school heads were sampled using cluster sampling technique and random sampling technique respectively. Also, a researcher-made questionnaire titled School Security Questionnaire (SSQ) was used for data collection. The validity of the instrument was determined using content and face validity approaches and its reliability coefficient of 0.68 was obtained using test-re-test approach. Collected data were analyzed using frequency count, percentages and t-test statistics tools. Findings revealed that 92.5% of sampled parents and school heads identified parental surveillance as most effective school security strategies for UBE schools followed by safety education, which 84.75% of respondents identified as also effective. On the other hand, 19.5% identified using human and animal security personnel as effective, thus, making this strategy as the least effective. However, significant difference was found in parents and school heads' perception of effective school security strategies. It was therefore concluded that while choices of school security strategy in school may differ based on parental and school leadership perception, it is important that parents are urged to be more vigilant in ensuring the safety of their children and wards to and from school. Apart from this, however, there is the need to provide adequate safety education to students, school staff, school security personnel and parents so as to keep them abreast of means of securing school life and property.

Introduction

Around the world today, parents, policy makers, and school officials have paid increasing attention to the issue of school crime. Many are getting worried about the safety of life and property on school premises. Particularly, concerned stakeholders are beginning to think of ways of making pupils of basic education safe because of their age and proneness to crime and violence. Because of extreme incidents of school violence, the problem of school crime has assumed national importance. In Nigeria today, barely is there a day that some major or minor school crime incidents are not reported in the mass media or the subject of a government report or investigation.

School crime is however a complex issue. It is a broad phenomenon whose definition depends on the perception of the definer. According to Grossger (2000), there are different

ways to define school crime. Schools appear to be safe or dangerous, depending on what one counts as school crime. Definitions of school crime range from considering any threat or theft as a crime to considering only violent attacks that are reported to police as crimes. They differ, too, depending on whether or not crimes committed against children on their way to school or on school playgrounds as well as in school buildings are counted. They also differ in whether crimes are counted only during school hours or also before and after school. In what ever way, school crimes are becoming many and threatening.

Many Nigerian schools are no longer safe. On daily basis, many experience series of threats to life of school staff, students and property. In October, 2010, at Ekeakpara in Aba, some kidnapers ambushed and kidnapped 15 school children of Abayi International School, Aba, while the pupils were being taken to school in their school bus. After the driver was pushed out of the bus, the pupils, some as young as 2 years old, were whisked into the bush and made to stay in the den of the kidnapers for 4 days until they were rescued by the Joint Task Force of Police and State Security Service on Thursday, September 30th 2010 (Saturday Punch, October 2, 2010). Similarly, it was reported that on 28th November, 2010, armed robbers invaded Owerri Girls Secondary School, Owerri, Imo State. The armed robbers consisted of 10 hoodlums. They attacked the girl's hostel around 1.30 am in the night and for hours successfully assaulted the students (Nigerian Compass, November 30, 2010).

In most cases, the crimes are perpetrated by students against students. In 2007, Adeola Adeosun, a female student of Government Secondary School, Garki, Abuja in 2007, was shot by two of her school mates, Audu Sanusi and Shokolo Sabo, with a pistol which the duo claimed they found along with one AK47 and 22 life ammunitions on their way to school (Sunday Punch, September 16, 2007). Similarly, in 2006 at Aja Estate Grammar School, Isolo, Lagos State, seven male students were caught raping an 18 year old SS1 student inside one of the unused classrooms (The Punch, Monday, 31, 2006).

These series of school insecurity give parents and school heads a lot of worries in Nigeria. However, unlike in advanced countries, much has not been done in conducting researches that will yield positive impact on the intensity of reducing school crimes in Nigeria. In advanced countries, such researches help them to project on cases of school security and come up with preventive policies. America, for example, has helped itself in the area of school safety policy formulation with the findings of a 1993 National Crime Victimization Survey, which indicated that about half the students in grade 6 through 12, witnessed victimization at school and about an eight had personally been victimized (Nolan et al., 1996). Another of such survey, conducted by the American School Health Association in 1989 helped the nation discover that among the sampled 11,000 students in grades eight through ten, 40 percent had been in a physical fight at school or on the school bus; 34 percent reported having been threatened; and 22 percent reported carrying a knife, gun, or other weapons.

The intensity of crimes in schools have made parents and school heads come up with ideas on how to ensure secured school environment. For example, experts have argued for installation of electronic security devices that can place every human and non-human parts of the school premises under surveillance round the clock. Many have also advised schools to make security personnels available within school premises. Conklin, (2007) for example called for what he termed target hardening approach. This involves all efforts put in place to discourage students and staff chances of carrying out crimes. This may include putting all unused doors under lock and key. Target hardening also include making sure that all school

members obey the school rules and regulations. The idea behind Target Hardening is that if every school member is disciplined, incidence of crime will reduce.

Having this kind of research in Nigeria in the present age of high incidence of insecurity is necessary. It is important that the nation embarks on studies that will help detect insecurity and workable security strategies at the Universal Basic Education level of school. No doubt, ever since the Nigerian government enacted the Universal Basic Education Act 2004, and aimed at enforcing compulsory enrolment of all children of Primary and Junior Secondary School age in the country in Universal Basic Education school, there is the need to find means of securing the schools so as to attract enrolment and assure parents of the safety of their children and wards.

One way of finding the means of securing schools for effective basic education is to ask parents and school heads. Asking these sets of people will provide adequate and rich information because they are the first stakeholders in child care. It is based on this background that this research was carried out to find out what parents and school heads in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State identify as effective strategies for sustaining school security in Universal Basic Education schools.

Theoretical Framework

This study is theoretically framed on the *Situational Crime Prevention Theory* (Conklin, 2007). This theory posits that crime can be controlled or out rightly eradicated if the situations or environmental factors that encourage perpetration of crimes are prevented. The theory promotes security strategies that involve the management, design, or manipulation of the immediate environment to make it impossible for criminals to succeed in carrying out crimes. Situational Crime Prevention Theory (SCPT) posits that crime will become impossible through using techniques that increase the offenders' efforts at committing crime, increase the offenders' risk of committing crime and reduction in the offenders' rewards from committing crime. Thus, adapting this theory suggest that school security can be improved through strategies that make crime difficult, risky and non profitable in and around school environment.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered to guide this study:

1. What are the identified effective school security strategies for Universal Basic Education schools by parents and school heads in Ilorin metropolis?
2. Is there significant difference in identified school security strategies by parents and school heads in Ilorin metropolis?
3. Do school security strategies identified by parents in Ilorin metropolis vary on the basis of gender?
4. Do school security strategies identified by school heads in Ilorin metropolis vary on the basis of years of school leadership experience?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were raised and tested in the study:

H₀₁ There is no significant difference in the school security strategies identified by parents and school heads to be effective in UBE schools in Ilorin metropolis

H₀₂ There is no significant difference in the school security strategies identified by parents to be effective in UBE schools in Ilorin metropolis, on the basis of gender

H₀₃ There is no significant difference in the school security strategies identified by school heads to be effective in UBE schools in Ilorin metropolis on the basis of year of school leadership experience

Methodology

The study adopted the survey method of research. Cluster sampling technique was used to draw 200 samples from the accessible population of parents who were residents of Ilorin metropolis. Using random sampling technique, a total of 200 school heads consisted of Headmasters/Headmistress of Primary schools and Principals/Vice Principals of Junior Secondary Schools were sampled. In all, a total of 400 respondents were sampled for the study.

To elicit the needed data from these samples, a researcher-made questionnaire titled School Security Questionnaire (SSQ) was used. The instrument has three (3) sections. Section 'A' elicited respondents' biographical data such as gender and year of school leadership experience. The Section 'B' asked respondents to pick among the five (5) provided possible school security strategies those they believe will be effective if adopted to secure Universal Basic Education schools in Ilorin metropolis. The Section 'C' has 20 items eliciting respondents' perceptions on the means of securing schools. The items were sub-divided under four categories namely: Adequate School Security Devices (ASSD), Involvement of Security Personnel (ISP), Parental Surveillance (PS) and Students' Surveillance-Effort (SSE). Each of the sub-division has five items and each item has response options as following: Always Effective (AE), Sometime Effective (SE), Hardly Effective (HE) and Never Effective (NE).

The validity of the instrument was determined using content and face validity approaches and its reliability coefficient of 0.68 was derived using test-re-test approach. Collected data were analyzed using percentages and t-test statistics.

Analysis and Results

Research Question 1:

What are the identified effective school security strategies in Universal Basic Education schools by parents and school heads in Ilorin metropolis?

Table 1: Identified Effective School Security Strategies

School Security Strategies	Parents		School Heads		Total n
	n	%	n	%	
1 Installation of electronic security devices in school	98	49	111 52.25	55.5	209
2 Using human and animal security personnel	46	23	32 19.5	16	78
3 Parental surveillance	186	93	184 92.5	92	370
4 Students' surveillance-efforts	110	55	76 46.5	38	186
5 Safety education for UBE stakeholders	162	81	177 84.75	88.5	339

As shown on Table 1, out of the sampled parents and school heads, 92.5% believed parental surveillance is an effective school security strategy at Universal Basic Education schools. 84.75% parents and school heads believed giving safety education to stakeholders will ensure UBE school security. 52.25% said the schools need to install electronic security devices to ensure security and only 19.5% was of the opinion that using human and animal security personnel will be effective in ensuring UBE school security.

Hypothesis Testing

H₀₁ There is no significant difference in the school security strategies identified by parents and school heads to be effective in UBE schools in Ilorin metropolis

Table 2: T-test Analysis of Identified Effective School Security Strategies in UBE Schools

Schools	n	$\bar{x}$	Sd	df	t.cal	t.crit
Parents	200	51.3	14.22	398	2.13	1.96
Sch. Heads	200	58.6	13.11			

As shown on Table 2, the t-test calculated 2.13 is higher than the t-test critical value, 1.96. Thus, hypothesis 1 was rejected and it was concluded that significant difference existed in what parents and school heads identified as effective school security strategies in UBE school located in Ilorin metropolis.

H₀₂ There is no significant difference in the school security strategies identified by parents to be effective in UBE schools in Ilorin metropolis, on the basis of gender

Table 3: T-test Analysis of Identified Effective School Security Strategies in UBE Schools

Parents	n	$\bar{x}$	Sd	df	t.cal	t.crit
Male	110	62.4	11.61	198	1.87	1.96
Female	90	60.8	13.12			

Data on Table 3 indicate that the t-test calculated value, 1.87 is less than the t-test critical value. Therefore, hypothesis 2 was accepted and it was concluded that there was no significant difference in the school security strategies identified by parents as effective in UBE School within Ilorin metropolis.

H₀₃ There is no significant difference in the school security strategies identified by school heads to be effective in UBE schools in Ilorin metropolis on the basis of year of school leadership experience

Table 3: T-test Analysis of Identified Effective School Security Strategies in UBE Schools

School Heads:n	X	Sd	df	t.cal	t.crit
S.Experience 104	54.22	13.21	198	1.52	1.96
L.Experience 96	56.27	14.33			

Key: S.Experience= Short years of teaching experience
L.Experience= Long years of teaching experience

The hypothesis 3 was also accepted because the t-test calculated value, 1.52 was less than the t-test critical value, 1.96. Invariably, it was concluded that there was no significant difference in the school security strategies identified by school heads as effective in UBE schools on the basis of their years of school leadership experience.

Discussion

Insecurity is an anti-educational development. It is a phenomenon that can step down the progress of education, threaten peaceful coexistence of school staff and students and render school management efforts ineffective. Situations of insecurity in school often start as upsurge in incidence of indiscipline. Conklin, (2007) writes that in situation of indiscipline, schools cannot maintain safety of life and property. This is because indiscipline often comes with break in school tranquility and infiltration of school physical and social boundaries.

There is increase in cases of school insecurity in Nigeria. Recently, there are reports of kidnapping, theft, arson and sexual molestations involving staff and students. These incidences are becoming so rampant that parents and school staff are now concerned and geared towards finding lasting solution. This study, for example, sought parents and school heads' perceived effective school security strategies for maintaining safety in Universal Basic Education (UBE) schools in Iforin metropolis.

Findings of the study revealed that parents and school heads' identified effective school security strategies, as indicated on Table 1 above, 92.5% of sampled parents and school heads identified parental surveillance as the most effective school security strategy. By parental surveillance they mean that parents should be more vigilant in handling their children to and from school. Such vigilance includes making arrangement for safe transportation of their children and wards to and from school. In addition to this, 84.75% parents and school heads believed that giving adequate safety education to UBE stakeholders is another effective means of achieving secured school environment. Such education to stakeholders such as parents, students and school staff can go a long way to guide illogical involvements that can make UBE students prone to insecurity.

Many of these strategies can help avert kidnapping of students, violence against school staff and destruction of school property. More also, the findings revealed that installation of electronic security devices in school can help in making school secure for teaching and learning activities; 52.25% of sampled respondents were of this opinion. Using this strategy falls under what Ayorinde (2011) referred to as Formal strategies. Formal strategies according to him are official and registered crime control efforts activities of the police, the court and correctional institutions towards eradicating crime in the larger society. Informal Strategies are the reactions and efforts of individuals and non-governmental groups towards preventing occurrence of crime and towards taking proactive action to rescue

situations of crime directly or indirectly e.g. confronting criminals or calling for formal security help in situations of crime.

Among the school security strategies that were not adjudged as effective by sampled parents and school heads is the use of human and animal security personnel. Only 19.55 of sampled parents and students were in support of this strategy. The reason for the unpopularity of this means of school security may be because of human error of distrust and abuse of closeness. Human beings have been found to be in guide of facilities and still become the link or source of information for organized criminals that would attack the facilities they guide. Thus, parents and school heads do not trust having security men at the school gate for example.

As written by Ayorinde (2011), school crime can be controlled through having school-based institutionalized group, associations, and neighborhood and club efforts at making school and its environment safe. A school can maintain security of life and property within its environment by encouraging and empowering student groups such as: Man-O-War, Road Safety Club, Girls' Guide, Boys Brigade, Boys Scout etc to provide security within school premises and surroundings. These school groups can as well complement the efforts of other institutions such as the police and neighborhood vigilante groups.

Many formal school-based vigilance groups can help in traffic control at the school gate, can monitor and provide direction to school visitors, serve as school security intelligence group for school authority and can educate school staff and students on means of maintaining secured learning environment. Horowitz and Boardens (1995) write that joining associations such as Man-O-War, Road Safety Club, Girls' Guide, Boys Brigade and Boys Scout can reduce youth restlessness and recklessness and can develop in youths the spirit of altruism in situation of crisis or disaster.

As also revealed in this study, significant difference was found between what parents and school heads identified as effective school security strategies. However, such identified strategies did not significantly differ among male and female parents and not among school heads of short and long years of school leadership experience. The reason for the initial difference among parents and school heads' perception may be as a result of background experiences of parents and school heads in child management. Parents are quite different from school heads in handling children while parents will act informally, school heads will act formally in child administration. Thus, their approaches are likely to differ.

Conclusion

School security is an integral aspect of school administration. It is one effort that can ensure productive school activities. As revealed in this study, school security require both formal and informal efforts that will make sure parents, staff and students are engaged in ensuring safe learning environment and movement from home to school. Also, it is been observed that the presence of security in the school could go in long way to curb students' immoral behaviours to the barest minimal which could enhance effective school functioning.

Recommendations

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

1. Adequate parental surveillance should be encouraged in other to promote safe school environment and encourage safety culture among students to and from school.
2. In addition to this, stakeholders in Universal Basic Education should be given safety education. Stakeholders such as parents, school staff and students and even security personnel

in the larger society need to be educated on issues of security that can make them security conscious.

3. Using human and animal security personnel should not be the major security plan of schools since such strategy may not be effective enough for achieving safe environment for teaching and learning activities.

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