

EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR CRIME AND INSECURITY PREVENTION IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria continues to struggle with persistent crime and insecurity, which is manifested in the form of terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, cultism, cybercrime, and other forms of security-related violence that threaten the national stability, economic development, and social cohesion of the country. While government interventions have traditionally focused on military operations, policing, and reactive law enforcement measures, comparatively little attention has been paid to education as a proactive and sustainable approach to crime prevention. This paper investigates the role of education in crime and insecurity prevention in Nigeria through a non-empirical, conceptual study of the available literature, policy frameworks, and theoretical perspectives. Drawing on human capital theory, social learning theory, and Social control theory, it is contended that education can be seen as a vital instrument for shaping moral values, developing employability, ensuring social cohesion, and equipping youth with the knowledge and skills to resist criminal and extremist influences. The study also identifies structural and systemic challenges that undermine the effectiveness of educational interventions, including inadequate funding, inequitable access, obsolete or poorly implemented curricula, and limited integration of security-related content. The analysis highlights the importance of educational systems reform that includes security-conscious education, enhanced civic and moral education, and the use of technology and public-private partnerships to improve educational outcomes. The paper concludes that education is a crucial preventive mechanism that can address the root causes of crime and insecurity in Nigeria, while complementing traditional enforcement approaches and ensuring long-term social stability, resilience, and national development.

Keywords: Education, Crime Prevention, Insecurity, National Security, Nigeria

Introduction

Crime and insecurity continue to pose a devastating challenge to Nigeria's social, economic, and democratic consolidation. The nation has encountered terrorism, armed robberies, kidnapping, cultism, cybercrime, among other criminal activities that affected livelihoods, the lack of confidence of citizens, and governance over the years. These challenges do not impact every community in the same way, but they are always a threat to safety, productivity, and social unity. Security experts see insecurity not only in the form of violence but also in the lack of secure social conditions that protect people's lives, property, and development opportunities (Baldwin, 2018; Buzan et al., 1998). The problem of insecurity, underdevelopment, and human vulnerability is particularly pressing in the Nigerian context, as poverty is often a breeding ground for violent crime, which is also closely tied to the country's institutional weaknesses and exclusionary practices (Dibia, 2021; Ewetan & Urhie, 2014; Garg, 2015).

The government has primarily responded to insecurity with repressive and reactive measures, including military action, intelligence gathering, law enforcement, and emergency laws. These are responses required when there is an imminent threat, but they are not always effective at addressing the root causes that keep criminality over time. The fact that insecurity has persisted in Nigeria, despite efforts to tackle it using force, indicates that the issue cannot be solved exclusively through force of arms, in the presence of other vulnerabilities among youth and marginal groups that are related to unemployment and poverty, and the poor working of institutions and socialization. Research on security governance in Nigeria reveals that insecurity is perpetuated by direct violent actors and broader structural factors that create grievances, exclusion, and instability (Chinwokwu, 2015; Dibia, 2021; Lenshie et al., 2024). That is why a preventive approach is needed – one that differs from the containment approach and focuses on the social systems that either diminish or amplify risk (Baldwin, 2018; World Bank, 2018).

In this light, education should be given due consideration as a developmental and preventive measure. Education is not just about getting people literate and numerate; it is about their values, discipline, civic identity, thinking, and what they expect from the society in which they participate lawfully. According to human capital theory, education increases employability and legitimate income options, therefore decreasing the incentive to engage in criminal activity (Lochner & Moretti, 2004; Machin et al., 2011). Social learning theory can also be used to understand how positive behavior can be modeled in educational settings, thereby reinforcing norms and exposing learners to pro-social influences that discourage violent behavior (Bandura, 1977). Peace and security education has also been found to nurture civic consciousness, tolerance, and non-violent conflict resolution, particularly in societies with social fragmentation and inequality, which are likely to trigger violence (Igbuzor, 2011; Iyamu & Edozie, 2015; Omorogbe et al., 2020). Education is thus not only a social service, but also an investment for a country such as Nigeria.

Education's importance is even more apparent when considering young people's vulnerability to crime, radicalization, and violent networks. Empirical evidence has confirmed that high-quality education is associated with lower rates of criminal involvement, as it offers greater legitimate opportunities and fosters greater social attachment, whereas poor-quality education leaves young people more vulnerable to criminal involvement and manipulation (Lochner & Moretti, 2004; Machin et al., 2011; Sas et al., 2020). Poor access to schools, regional inequality, attacks on schools, and the lack of access to quality learning opportunities for many children in conflict-affected areas are also closely linked to insecurity in Nigeria (Lenshie et al., 2024; Omorogbe et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2024). Education is also a denial of civic formation, social

mobility, and questioning of violent ideologies when learners are denied their education. This underscores the importance of education as a means of preventing the link between social disadvantage and criminal recruitment and violent extremism (Sas et al., 2020; UNDP, 2024; World Bank, 2018).

This paper, therefore, examines how education can be used to prevent crime and insecurity in Nigeria, the theoretical perspectives that underpin the relationship, and the factors that make education a weak or strong preventive measure in Nigeria. It calls on national security policies to take more deliberate action in education by modifying the curriculum, promoting civic and peace education, making schools safer, making vocational education more relevant, and fostering closer coordination among education authorities, communities, and security institutions. This aligns with scholarship that connects education to peacebuilding, responsible citizenship, and national stability, as well as with the limitations posed by weak funding, inadequate infrastructure, and disjointed policy implementation (Agogbua & Umeozor, 2024; Osawe, 2021; Salaudeen, 2021). The paper thus adds to the understanding of how education can contribute to lasting peace and reduce crime in Nigeria as a preventive security tool rather than a welfare arm of the government. The paper, therefore, contributes to a more holistic understanding of how education can help reduce crime and build durable peace in Nigeria, as a preventive security tool, rather than a peripheral welfare arm of the government (Igbuzor, 2011; Omorogbe et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2024).

Literature Review

Conceptual Clarifications

Education is an organized and continuous process through which people acquire knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes for their personal development and better functioning in society. However, education is not only found in the classroom or in a certificate; more broadly, as part of national security, it is found in civic, moral, and peace-oriented learning that leads to responsible citizenship, social discipline, and a commitment to the common good. This more general awareness is significant in Nigeria, as the quality of education affects people's employability and the internalization of lawful behavior, democratic values, and harmonious living. According to scholars such as Igbuzor (2011) and Omorogbe et al. (2020), peace and security education can contribute positively to national development by fostering citizens who are conscious of their duties and less susceptible to destructive social behavior. In this view, the function of education is to serve as a socializing institution that fosters the norms and capacities essential to a stable social order.

Crime is defined as an act, behavior, or inaction that conflicts with the law and/or social norms and is subject to punishment by lawfully constituted authorities. The concept in Nigeria is broad and encompasses non-violent, but highly destabilizing offenses, including cybercrime, corruption, fraud, and organized economic crimes, as well as violent offenses like terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, cult-related violence, and armed robbery. Such types of crime not only cause harm to the victims but also reduce people's trust in the institutions, discourage investment, disrupt learning, trade, and create fear in communities. Dibia (2021) indicates that the threat of terrorism has a substantial impact on peace and national development, and Lochner and Moretti (2004) and Machin et al. (2011) provide more general examples showing that education can have a measurable effect in reducing criminal involvement by enhancing legitimate life chances. In this regard, crime is not just a legal issue; it is a developmental and social issue arising from larger structural issues.

Insecurity is the state of anxiety, uncertainty, and vulnerability that prevents individuals, communities, or institutions from enjoying a secure life, secure property, and secure social order.

In accordance with Buzan et al. (1998), insecurity assumes greater importance when the state and its institutions are unable to protect people from internal and external threats to their collective well-being. In Nigeria, insecurity is linked to inequality, weak governance, poverty, low enrolment and employment, which all provide a conducive environment for violence and criminal recruitment (Baldwin, 2018; Garg, 2015). This is the reason why crime prevention needs to be more than simply policing and military reaction to eliminate the conditions that could lead to criminal acts. Education plays a key role in this preventive logic because it can make people less vulnerable, more integrated into society, and better equipped with knowledge and values to resist the influence of violence and participate constructively in the life of society (Igbuzor, 2011; Omorogbe et al., 2020; Sas et al., 2020).

Theoretical Framework

The human capital theory, social learning theory, and social control theory are used in this study to explain the mechanisms by which education can provide preventive solutions to crime and insecurity, and how education is heavily dependent on the learning environment. These views collectively reveal that education is not just a source of knowledge but also a means of accessing legal opportunities, adopting pro-social attitudes, and fostering more positive integration into society. These theories are particularly relevant in Nigeria, where insecurity is associated with poverty, exclusion, poor institutionalization, and vulnerability of the youth, as they link classroom learning with the wider social outcomes. They also contribute to understanding why such educational interventions must be both structurally sound and socially relevant to have any meaningful effect on crime behavior (Baldwin, 2018; Buzan et al., 1998; Omorogbe et al., 2020).

The human capital theory underpins the study. It states that investment in education increases productivity, employability, and earning potential, thereby reducing the likelihood that people resort to crime to survive. Indeed, several studies have demonstrated that education is negatively associated with criminal involvement, through its role in increasing legitimate opportunities and raising the opportunity cost of offending (Lochner & Moretti, 2004; Machin et al., 2011). The theory is especially relevant in Nigeria, where unemployment and underemployment are major stresses on young people, with many crimes stemming from this frustration and the absence of stable livelihoods. The theory also has its boundaries when conditions do not always ensure good jobs for those with formal qualifications. In this regard, education related to vocational skills, entrepreneurship, labor-market relevance, and pathways into productive life holds the greatest preventive value (Omorogbe et al., 2020; World Bank, 2018).

Bandura's social learning theory is a behavioral and relational approach to crime prevention. It holds that behavior is modeled, copied, reinforced, and acted upon by others, which is why schools can support either positive or detrimental peer norms, depending on the school's quality and culture. Teachers, curricula, and peers in a well-structured learning context can demonstrate discipline, empathy, conflict resolution, and lawful behavior; in a weak and violent context, however, youth learn to be aggressive, truant, undisciplined, and lawless. When education is used purposefully to imbue values and behavior, rather than merely content, it is a preventative. Social learning theory has demonstrated the influence of civic, peace, and values education in countering undesirable influences and promoting non-violent relations in Nigerian society, where concerns about radicalization, cultism, and violent influences are prevalent (Bandura, 1977; Igbuzor, 2011; Sas et al., 2020).

Social control theory complements the other two theories by stressing the connections between people and institutions, and between people and socially accepted goals. In Nigeria, this translates into enhanced shared identity, discipline, and belonging in schools, particularly in a

plural society where regional insecurity, inequality, and social fragmentation often undermine trust. Educational institutions take a protective stance by providing safe, inclusive environments with structure and accountability, thereby preventing alienation. However, if schools are unavailable, unsafe, or overcrowded, or if they are disrupted by conflict, these connections are broken, and the benefits of education are reduced. That is why the theory supports the development of education not only in terms of extension of schooling but also the need to ensure safe schools, inclusive access, and better coordination of education and security policy if education is to be a true tool of social stability and crime prevention (Igbuzor, 2011; Omorogbe et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2024).

Review of Related Literature

There is consensus in existing scholarship that education can be a useful and effective tool for crime prevention and reducing insecurity, as it helps create the economic and social environment that shapes behavior. Evidence from international research indicates that education helps reduce criminal involvement by increasing access to lawful activities, raising the costs of crime, and developing cognitive and social skills that promote self-control and non-violent options (Lochner & Moretti, 2004; Machin et al., 2011). Apart from the economic impacts, education also has positive impacts on critical thinking, tolerance, and civic engagement, which play a significant role in thwarting radicalization and violent mobilization in fragile environments (Sas et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2024). The present work is significant in light of such findings, since they indicate that an educational system can not only retain individuals in school but also develop skills and attitudes that make violent and non-violent alternatives less appealing. It is thus viewed as a preventive social institution that can break the cycle from vulnerability to deviance if it is accessible, relevant, and of good quality (World Bank, 2018).

In Nigeria's literature, several studies have examined the relationship between education and national security, particularly in the context of civic formation, human development, and social responsibility. Igbuzor (2011) maintains that peace and security education can help achieve sustainable peace by equipping learners with the skills needed to become responsible citizens, and Omorogbe et al. (2020) point out that education plays a role in national security by producing knowledgeable, disciplined, and socially conscious citizens. Such a line of argument is particularly germane in a nation with ethnic diversity, continuous security concerns, and a lack of equitable educational development. Education has also been shown to be a soft-security strategy that can reinforce shared values, social cohesion, and peaceful coexistence, thereby complementing formal law enforcement (Igbuzor, 2011; Omorogbe et al., 2020; Iyamu & Edozie, 2015). In this regard, education is not an academic endeavor, but also an essential component of the social fabric necessary for stability and security.

Concurrently, the literature makes it evident that education is not a panacea for crime and insecurity unless it is embedded in societal structures. Research on insecurity and development in Nigeria demonstrates that criminality and violent recruitment are more likely to occur in settings characterized by poverty, weak institutions, exclusion, and regional inequality (Buzan et al., 1998; Garg, 2015; Dibia, 2021). In addition, Related Scholarship highlights that school disruptions, restricted access, and fragile education systems can exacerbate vulnerabilities in conflict-affected areas, where children and youth are already at risk of insecurity and social marginalization (Lenshie et al., 2024; UNESCO, 2024). In this context, the importance of education will rely on its safety, inclusiveness, and linkage to wider social policy. Education can contribute to prevention efforts only when coupled with institutional capacity, adequate access, and avenues for social and economic inclusion (World Bank, 2018; Osawe, 2021).

Indeed, the literature suggests a consistent message: education is a key tool in preventing conflict, but it is most effective when it is relevant, accessible, secure, and part of a broader development and security agenda. Research on youth crime and social disattachment has indicated that while it is important for young people to be in school, the content and quality of learning, as well as the social context, all influence whether school is protective (Bandura, 1977; Sas et al., 2020). This is why the present study considers education not only as a developmental tool but also as a security tool. That is why the present study uses education as an instrument of development and, at the same time, as an instrument for security, rather than treating it as a welfare intervention. It also highlights recurring references in the literature to the need for curriculum reform, civic and peace education, school safety, and relevance to the school-to-work transition (Agogbua & Umeozor, 2024; Igbuzor, 2011; Omorogbe et al., 2020). The literature reviewed warrants a more in-depth conceptual analysis of the role of education within the Nigerian crime prevention and national security framework.

Gap in the Literature

While there is increasing scholarly interest in the relationship between education and security, the literature lacks a body of work on the relationship between educational reform and Nigeria's evolving patterns of insecurity. Many previous studies still focus on military deployment, policing, intelligence gathering, and other reactive approaches rather than on education as a long-term preventive tool (Chinwokwu, 2015; Osawe, 2021). When the subject of education is mentioned, it tends to focus on broad, general norms, with little attention to the integration of civic formation, school access, teacher quality, and school safety in a national security context (Igbuzor, 2011; Omorogbe et al., 2020). The literature also generally ignores the link between insecurity and educational exclusion, poor socialization, inequity in the region, and exposure to criminal activities and violent recruitment among young people (Garg, 2015; Dibia, 2021; Lenshie et al., 2024). This leaves a conceptual space unfilled, however, as the preventative effect of education does not make sense if it is not considered in the context of the relationship between schooling conditions and the structuring of opportunities, social inclusion, and belonging. A conceptual analysis is therefore justified to position education not as a peripheral welfare issue, but as a strategic part of Nigeria's broader national security response (Agogbua & Umeozor, 2024; UNESCO, 2024; World Bank, 2018).

Methodology

The study employs a conceptual qualitative review design appropriate for a paper that aims to explore ideas, arguments, and policy implications rather than measure variables in the field. It is not an empirical study based on questionnaires, interviews, or statistical testing. Rather, it is based on secondary materials derived from peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, policy documents, and institutional reports that directly address education, crime prevention, insecurity, and national security in Nigeria. The design is relevant because it involves interpreting existing knowledge, comparing perspectives, and synthesizing arguments across related fields (education, security studies, sociology, and development studies) that collectively constitute the subject of discussion. This will enable the paper to offer insight into the dominant scholarly views on education and insecurity, the consensus that exists around them, and the policy and conceptual blind spots.

This analysis method is thematic synthesis, which presents the literature in thematic form rather than as a summary of the sources. The materials were read carefully, focusing on four central issues: the structural causes of crime and insecurity, the social and moral role of education, the actual context of Nigeria's security situation, and the policy landscape shaping the potential for

meaningful educational reform to prevent crime and insecurity. This allowed the study to go beyond the description of what others have said to the critical appraisal of the literature, not only what has been said, but also how it relates to the current challenges in Nigeria. The method also allows for a balanced discussion of the merits and drawbacks of education as a security measure, while keeping the paper within a conceptual and analytical framework suitable for the study's purpose.

Discussion

1 Education as Structural Crime Prevention

Education can help reduce crime by addressing the structural conditions that make criminal involvement appealing or necessary. Poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, and poor access to quality education are all associated with a variety of insecurities in Nigeria, particularly for youth who are most vulnerable to recruitment by criminal groups and violent networks. Learning that is available and relevant provides learners with literacy, numeracy, technical skills, and self-assurance to engage in legal economic activities. This is because it increases the opportunity cost of crime and provides more viable alternatives to survival and growth. Education should therefore be seen as a social good: a preventive tool that can help reduce the social drivers of banditry, cultism, kidnapping, and other criminal activities (Garg, 2015; Dibia, 2021; Lochner & Moretti, 2004; Machin et al., 2011).

This preventive impact of education is heightened when linked to practical economic pathways. An all-theoretical school system may increase awareness, but it may not be enough to reduce material pressures, which could lead many youths to engage in criminal activity. Education with vocational training and entrepreneurship, digital skills, and labor-market relevance, on the other hand, can enhance employability and boost the odds of lawful income generation. This should be particularly true of Nigeria, where unemployment and under-employment among the youth continue to be key factors in insecurity and social disenchantment. Thus, the contribution of education is not only in the classroom but also in whether it equips learners for economic participation and social mobility (Omorogbe et al., 2020; Agogbua & Umeozor, 2024; World Bank, 2018).

Education also operates structurally, in that it may diminish vulnerability from one generation to the next. The lack of access to quality schooling among children and youths can result in diminished civic capacity, fewer skills, and less attachment to lawful society, thereby increasing their vulnerability to crime or manipulation by extremist actors. Education, on the other hand, can provide hope, discipline, and direction and so serve as a buffer against social marginalization. This is a structural solution to food insecurity rather than a quick fix; it is an investment in reducing the conditions that contribute to it. In Nigeria, this means that, in addition to policing and military action, access to schooling, its relevance, and quality should be equally paramount in the formulation of crime prevention policies (Berebon, 2025; Lenshie et al., 2024; UNESCO, 2024).

2 Civic, Moral, and Peace Education

Apart from its economic value, education helps prevent crime by fostering civic and moral values. Schools are not only settings for learning academic content but also places where values, norms, and habits are shaped. Civic education enables learners to understand their rights, responsibilities, and public duties, and to grasp the meaning of participation in a democratic society; moral education promotes honesty, self-control, respect for others, and ethical reasoning. These are significant in Nigeria because while economic hardship is one of the drivers of insecurity, weak social responsibility, loss of trust, and the prevalence of behaviors that normalize

violence, corruption, and disregard for rules are other drivers of insecurity. Education is a formative institution in the sense that it can mould attitudes before they crystallize into criminal behavior (Igbuzor, 2011; Iyamu & Edozie, 2015; Omorogbe et al., 2020).

Peace education is especially pertinent in a country afflicted by ethnic, religious, and regional conflicts. It is a tool that, if well conceived, can be used to teach dialogue, tolerance, mediation, and non-violent confrontation, enabling learners to respond to disagreement without resorting to violence. This is important because social division, mutual suspicion, and lack of trust between groups exacerbate numerous insecurity issues in Nigeria. The integration of peace education into the school curriculum can provide learners with emotional and intellectual resources to defy violence, counter extremist ideologies, and actively and positively engage with difference. Such learning may benefit not only personal behavior but also the health of the broader political society, promoting social cohesion and peaceful coexistence (Bandura, 1977; Sas et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2024).

The literature also indicates that civic and peace education is most effective when supported by the culture and environment of the schools. Teachers' role-modeling of peace-building values of discipline, fairness, and respect, and a safe, inclusive school climate and culture, increases the likelihood of learners internalizing peace-building values. When schools are threatened by violence, crowded, poorly managed, and under-resourced, the moral and civic role of schooling is diminished. This is why calls for values education in the Nigerian context, in abstract terms, require deliberate action in curriculum reform, teacher training, and school safety. Education is one way to reduce crime, but only if the civic and moral elements of education are reinforced by institutions that reflect the same values of civic and moral responsibility (Baldwin, 2018; Buzan et al., 1998; Igbuzor, 2011).

3 Education, Social Integration, and Informal Social Control

Education is also a means of preventing crime by enhancing social cohesion and social control. According to social control theory, a lack of attachment to institutions, commitment to normal goals, involvement in constructive activities, and internalization of social norms are likely to increase the likelihood of deviant behavior. School is a key element in this process because it exposes young people to organized encounters with others' expectations, especially those of their teachers and peers. Omorogbe et al. (2020), Baldwin (2018), and Iyamu & Edozie (2015) all note that in Nigeria, youth alienation, weak trust, and split identities are strong drivers of antisocial behavior. Schools have a potential role in fostering a sense of belonging and shared purpose that can curb these behaviors.

Education fosters social integration by introducing students to various groups, concepts, and values in a shared structural framework. This is significant in a plural society such as Nigeria, where there must be sufficient room for the positive interaction among ethnicity, religion, and region, or else they become potential sources of tension. Schools can mitigate this risk through cooperative learning, civic engagement, and respect for difference, which all help reinforce community bonds and build a more stable community. Educating them to work collaboratively, to prevent conflict, and to abide by shared rules helps them remain out of violent peer groups or to avoid engaging in gang activity. Thus, education is an informal control device that supplements official policing and law enforcement (Igbuzor, 2011; Bandura, 1977; Sas et al., 2020).

The literature also shows that the social control role of education is undermined when schools are unsafe, inaccessible, and excluded from conflict-ridden communities. Insecurity makes children's learning impossible by attacking, displacing, and leaving; by causing them to be afraid of going to school; and by making them attend irregularly. The scarce infrastructure and inadequate

teaching conditions affect the school's ability to function as a stabilizing social institution. This has led to a vicious circle where insecurity undermines learning, and weak learning eventually increases the likelihood of falling victim to crime and radicalization. Education, therefore, needs to be included in the architecture of security itself rather than being considered as a welfare issue. However, in the context of Nigeria, informal social control can be enhanced through education, achieved through safe schools, inclusive access, and policies that integrate education with peacebuilding and community resilience initiatives (Lenshie et al., 2024; Dibia, 2021; UNESCO, 2024).

4. Policy Implications for Nigeria

If education is to be useful as a crime-prevention instrument, it must be integrated into national security planning rather than kept as a standalone social sector. Although armed violence is central to insecurity in Nigeria, structural vulnerabilities such as poor schooling, exclusion, and weak social development also contribute to insecurity, hence the need to link educational reform with broader security and development policies (Omorogbe et al., 2020; World Bank, 2018; UNDP, 2024). Thus, curriculum reform, safer schools, peace education, civic education, and vocational training, aligned with the realities of the job market, should be part of a security-sensitive education program. This is crucial because if education is integrated with social and economic inclusion, it can provide fewer avenues for young people to engage in crime, extremism, and violent group behavior (Agogbua & Umeozor, 2024; Sas et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2024).

There is also a need to improve coordination among education authorities, security agencies, local communities, and local institutions regarding policy integration. Education has been largely ineffective in Nigeria because of the lack of security in school settings, meaning schools are not adequately protected from insecurity, adequately resourced, or functional. The literature on insecurity and development has posited that insecurity undermines communities' trust in government. When this trust is lost, learners are more likely to be affected by the disruption, drop-out and long-term marginalisation of schools, which further contributes to social instability (Dibia, 2021; Lenshie et al., 2024; Ewetan & Urhie, 2014). The school safety therefore must be considered in national security planning and steps must be taken to improve early warning, community monitoring, protective infrastructure and support to conflict-prone teachers and learners in school (Chinwokwu, 2015; Igbashenge & Tion, 2022; Kankara & Abdullahi, 2024).

The policy implications are evident: education needs to be further enhanced as a preventative institution, if it is to be properly funded, made available to all, make its content relevant, and provide meaningful routes to employment and citizenship. If education is relevant and tied to opportunity, it can make it less attractive to engage in crime and boost youth's ties to society and to legitimate opportunities. Meanwhile, education policy should make an effort to correct the underlying factors that impede its preventive role, such as poverty, regional disparity, inequality in the implementation of education policy, and coordination of various institutions (Garg, 2015; Osawe, 2021; Salaudeen, 2021). This is in line with the country's general policy where education is not considered as a less important aspect of security but one of the long-term pillars of peace, social cohesion and sustainable development in Nigeria (Baldwin, 2018; Buzan et al., 1998; Igbuzor, 2011).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, this paper has explored how education can be used to prevent crime and insecurity in Nigeria and the fact that education is a key preventive tool in the broad-based security architecture, has been established. The study, through a conceptual analysis of the existing literature and relevant theoretical perspectives, identified that the causes of crime and

insecurity are not just security threats, but also deeper rooted structural problems like poverty, unemployment, exclusion of the population, lack of civic orientation and poor access to quality education. Through education, values are shaped, civic responsibility is enhanced, peaceful coexistence is reinforced and social integration is fostered, in addition to literacy and employability, as was revealed during the discussion. Thus the study posits that education can be considered as a developmental and security intervention that can tackle some of the root causes that make criminal behaviour and violent extremism attractive to vulnerable populations.

The analysis also revealed that there is a multi-faceted linkage between education and security. The study emphasized the role of education in increasing legitimate economic opportunities and decreasing the incentives to engage in criminal activity, based on the Human Capital Theory. Social Learning Theory illustrated how schools were important contexts for spreading positive norms, ethical values and socially acceptable behaviour and Social Control Theory showed how schools can reinforce attachment to society and adherence to shared norms and expectations of conformity. In combination, these theoretical approaches indicate that education can also decrease crime rates, both through individual-level processes of change and by impacting on social conditions. The study also revealed that the ability of education to effectively prevent harm is sometimes hindered by lack of funding, poor infrastructure, lack of teachers, inequitable educational opportunities, disruption of schools due to insecurity and weak policy coordination between the education and security sectors. The barriers restrict the developmental and preventive roles of the education system to be effective.

One of the big conclusions of this study is that the security problems in Nigeria are not be permanently solved with coercive measures. While military operations, policing, intelligence gathering and police work are vital elements of national security management, they are focused on symptoms of insecurity and not on the causes. The conditions that allow young people to be recruited into criminal and violent networks will continue as long as there is a significant number of young people who lack access to high quality education, productive work, and meaningful civic participation. The results thus support the notion that education investment should be seen as a planning element of national security. Education can be a long-term tool to tackle vulnerability to crime, radicalisation and social unrest through building human capital, fostering social cohesion and enhancing opportunities for lawful engagement in society. This approach moves beyond the concept of security as simply the ability of the state to react to threats, and also one that acknowledges that sustainable peace requires the state's capacity to respond to the social conditions that spawn threats.

Based on the results of this study, four recommendations are provided. In this regard, it is recommended to systematically incorporate peace education, civic education, moral education and security awareness into appropriate curricula at different levels to build responsible citizenship and non-violent conflict resolution. Second, government and relevant stakeholders should prioritize the protection of schools, teachers and learners, especially in conflict prone areas where insecurity remains to affect education activities and add to the vulnerability of youth. Thirdly, education programs need to be better oriented toward the realities of the labour market through enhanced vocational, technical, entrepreneurial and digital skills training that would boost employment and economic inclusion. Lastly, there is a need to improve the partnership between schools, communities, civil society organisations and security forces to ensure that school policies are embedded in holistic crime prevention and national security policies.

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