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Overcoming Insecurity Challenges via Health Education Arena in North West Nigeria			
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Keywords		Abstract	
Insecurity, Insecurity Challenges, Health Education.		The paper examines overcoming insecurity challenges via health education arena in North West Nigeria, the aim of the paper is to provide individuals with skills to build resilience, change behaviour and community stabilization in insecurity. The paper begin with introduction, concept of health education in insecurity, concept of insecurity, insecurity challenges, effects of insecurity, solutions to insecurity challenges in North West, overcoming insecurity challenges through health education in North West, conclusion and recommendations such as Health educators should gear up to provide awareness on security measures in maintenance of health and wellbeing in the face of insecurity in North West such as physical, emotional and mental health consciousness, government should enhance more security infrastructure and training of personals that can overcome the concurrent insecurity challenges in North West, community members and stake holders should provide proper policing and conflict resolution strategies that can be employ to mitigate the insecurity challenges in North West.	
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Introduction

Insecurity is the feeling of or absence of security or exposure to danger, hazard, uncertainty, want of confidence, doubtfulness, inadequately guarded or protected, lacking

stability, troubled, lack of protection and unsafe (Sule, et al. 2024). Clash between farmers and herders over land for farming and grazing of animals is the primary challenge that lead to the formation of ethnic militias, vigilante raids and extrajudicial killings in North West states been the fertile plains and grazing lands of Nigeria where nomadic pastoralist and sedentary agriculturalist groups coexisted, traded and turned to local peacekeeping mechanisms. However, due to the large land allocations to estate owners by the responsible authority pushed herders lost their historical grazing routes which result to proliferation of criminal gangs in the region that have been behind a surge of banditry and kidnapping for ransom targeting individuals, communities, companies, boarding schools and government agencies. The ransoms collected through the mass abduction have become a means of wealth and business for criminals and serves as privilege to engage in drug abuse, sexual harassment and other form human right violation which affect health and wellbeing. The activities of these organized gangs attracted the attention of militant Islamist groups such as Lakurawa and Ansaru whose deployed their clerics to the region to preach against democracy and government peace efforts, research evidence shows that Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Western World countries are developing ties with criminal groups in an attempt to radicalize the people in the region. In zamfara state where armed gang problem originated, rival groups raid and clash over the artisanal gold mines attracted many impoverished and unemployed young men to join such an act. These gangs are known to hideout in the Sububu and Dansadau forests smuggling arms across the border from Niger republic purposely to destabilize the region. Zamfara state government estimated that, ten thousand (10,000) so called bandits are spread between fourty (40) camps in the state (Mark, 2021).

In order to effectively address the security challenges in North West Nigeria strategies for fostering civic awareness and engagement must be employ, it is essential to identify key stakeholders who can play a significant role in promoting these efforts. These stakeholders

include health educators, traditional rulers, civil society organizations, religious leaders, volunteer vigilant groups and the youths. By leveraging their influence and networks these stakeholders can help to mobilize citizens, promote awareness, and foster engagement in security related issues (Abdullahi & Umar, 2024).

Concept of Health Education in Insecurity in North West Nigeria

Health education is a profession that delivers learning experiences on health topics to provide people with knowledge, skills and tools to live healthier lives in insecurity. Health education presents information to audience on different health topics including the health benefits or threats they face and provides tools to build resilience, capacity and support behaviour change in insecurity (Rural Health Information Hub, 2026).

According to Danielle, (2025), health education plays pivotal role in improving community wellbeing by promoting knowledge and healthy practices across all gender and age groups, addressing a wide range of health issues from chronic diseases to physical, emotional and mental health and influencing policy and economic outcomes in insecurity.

Health education is a discipline that provides systematic approach to individuals to acquire knowledge and skills in disease prevention, health promotion and hygiene practices as well as maintenance of physical, emotional and mental health in insecurity.

Concept of Insecurity in North West Nigeria

Insecurity comes in different forms in Nigeria and bruising more fears to the lives of the common people. Insecurity is compounded by hunger, unemployment, inadequate infrastructures and other vices such as bomb blast and use of other sophisticated offensive weapon to destroy lives and properties (Agboola, 2020).

According to Ogochukwu, (2024), Insecurity is described as the vulnerability or non-resilience to economic, environmental, food, health, personal, political and information dangers, threats or harms expressed inform of kidnapping, insurgency, killer herdsmen,

extrajudicial killings, ethno religious conflict, armed robbery, militancy, banditry, cybercrime and attacks by unknown gunmen.

According to Adebayo, et al. (2024), insecurity refers to lose of trust, be frightened, unsettled, oppressed, lose focus and be devastated and lose your humanity.

According to Stephen, (2023), Insecurity is the existence of fear, threat and destruction to the survival of people sharing the same geographical location, bounded with collective social action, having similar culture or mixed culture, engaging in social interaction through social network and performing similar political and social responsibility arising from pervasive inequalities and unfairness, ethno religious conflicts, weak security system, loss of socio cultural and communal value system and terrorism within the social group or from neighbouring environment.

Insecurity can be seen as the perception of expected or unexpected happening or event that may result to any form of inconveniences, disturbance, human right violation and abuses which directly or indirectly affect human health and wellbeing.

Insecurity Challenges in North West Nigeria

Francisca & Chinonyelum, (2021); Adebayo, et al. (2024), outline challenges that have brought a setback in the fight against current security situation in North West Nigeria and they include;

- i. Unemployment: There is high level of unemployment in North West States especially among the youths in the rural areas. Many youths are staying idle and are leaving at the mercy of begging. There are too many young people in the villages that are jobless and without any means of livelihood. The frustration that results from this and the need for survival makes the youths vulnerable to manipulation into committing various crimes even for a little pay.

- ii. Poverty: The rate of poverty in North West states is quite alarming and the result of this is an increase in crimes and other social vices that add to the problem of internal security in the states.
- iii. Inefficient government intervention: Failure and lack of political will on the side of the government to fight crimes squarely are among the major impediments affecting the fight against armed banditry in North West States.
- iv. Corrupt government officials: Stealing public funds has become a norm. In a bid to get or stay in power or aspirants political offices mostly have been linked to create armies of political thugs during election periods and this usually results in eruption of violent related offences as currently being experienced in the states.
- v. Porous border: The country unstable frontiers where human movements are essentially untracked have led to Nigeria level of insecurity. There is an unregulated inflow of small arms and light weapons into the country as a result of the porous borders which has enabled militancy and crime in Nigeria. Nigeria hosts over 70% of about 8 million illegal weapons that have been used to create a security crisis. The porous condition of Nigerian borders has contributed the uncontrollable influx of migrant's predominantly young people from nearby countries such as the Republic of Niger, Chad and Republic of Benin accountable for some of the insecurity promoting criminal activities in Nigeria.

Effects of Insecurity in North West Nigeria

Since the inception of this decade, attacks have occurred on school, town and villages in Nigeria even though were not reported in the media and their occurrences are not in doubt (Nwosu, et al, 2019).

Ameh, (2015); Akintunde & Musa, (2016), outline some effects of insecurity in North West as follows;

- i. Forceful displacement of people from their towns and communities: As at December 2021 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), reported that, the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) in Nigeria raise from 2.1 million in 2018 to 2.9 million. And there are 1.9 million IDPs in North eastern Nigeria as of May 2020. 60 percent of the IDPs are children. From May 2 to 8, 2022 alone 1,912 people were displaced in North western Nigeria according to Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). As at December 2021, the DTM had registered 969,757 IDPs across North western and central states of Nigeria. Most of the IDPs are women and children. It is important to note that, the number of unidentified displaced persons who are living in urban areas across the major cities in Nigeria far outnumbered those in the camps who are registered by organs of the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies. However, because they are hard to track, there is hardly any reliable estimate about their number. These IDPs both identified and unidentified live a life of penury and misery with limited or no access to basic amenities such as health facilities and potable drinking water.
- ii. The attacks on schools usually lead to vandalization and outright destruction of school facilities which discourage the establishment of new schools. Consequently, government resources are depleted as funds meant for other developmental projects are channelled to tackling the aftermath of attacks while educational attainment in terms of quality of graduates and manpower suffers which impinge on overall national development aspirations.
- iii. Increasing number of out of school children. A study conducted by Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) in 2018 revealed that, there was estimated 10.2 million out of school children in Nigeria. However, according to UNICEF as of 2021, there are about 18 million out of school children and a total of 11,536 schools in Nigeria were

closed since December 2020 due to abductions and security challenges and noting that the closure has impacted the education of approximately 1.3 million children in the 2020/21 academic year but most boarding secondary schools in North western Nigeria were turned into day schools which result in some students dropping out due to their distance from the school. Moreover, some schools in remote areas are closed indefinitely due to persistent insecurity of the areas.

- iv. Insecure school environment affect the learning of children and situations of insecurity triggers traumatic disorder and toxic stress that affect learning negatively. General school attendance and enrolment are equally affected as parents pull their children out of schools while in some extreme cases insecurity has led to closure of schools.
- v. Insecurity is a serious challenge that affect and discourage participation in Basic Education in Nigeria because at the initial stage schools did not require high level security only need a night guard to discourage the activities of burglars, Police are only seen in schools when there is riot unlike high institutions, basic schools have no security offices except a gate man where provided but due to the present kidnapping, bombing and armed robbery school environment has become a threat.

Solutions to Insecurity Challenges in North West Nigeria

Adebayo, et al (2024) observes some ways by which North West can get out of insecurity challenges and include;

- i. Understanding the root causes of insecurity: In order to create effective solutions to insecurity it is important to first understand the root causes. Majority of the insecurity plaguing the country can be attributed to a variety of factors including weak governance, economic inequality and rise of organized crime and terrorism.
- ii. Increasing public awareness of security measures: This can be done by creating public health awareness campaigns that will inform citizens the risk of crime by

providing them with information on how protect themselves, report incidents to the nearest security agency and access government services.

- iii. Enhancing security infrastructure: Another solution to insecurity in Nigeria is to enhance security infrastructure such as roads, rail ways and airports and can be done by investing in repairs to improve the safety of roadways and railways as well as the installation of safety systems and the construction of new airports.
- iv. Establishing effective conflict resolution strategies: will promote peace and combat the rise of extremist groups and this can be done by investing in conflict prevention and resolution initiatives such as youth, religious, health literacy and ethnic dialogue programs.
- v. Creating an economy with appropriate social, economic and physical infrastructure for business and industrial growth.
- vi. Boosting people living standards by establishing more centres of entrepreneurship across the nation.
- vii. Creation of job opportunities by government and nongovernmental organization for the youth that will make them abstain from committing all forms of crimes as well as politicians who use thugs should be barred from politics for life.
- viii. Promoting good governance, openness, accountability through the use of print and digital media and inform the public through conferences, seminars and NGOs programmes.

Overcoming Insecurity Challenges through Health Education in North West Nigeria

Health education in overcoming insecurity challenges may involve multifaceted approaches that address physical, mental and social consequences of violence through building resilience, behaviour change and community stabilization in insecurity;

- i. **Building Resilience:** Everyone experiences difficulties from everyday challenges and life misfortune to traumatic events with more lasting impact like insecurity, the death of a loved one, life altering accident or a serious illness. Each change affects people differently by bringing a unique flood of thoughts, strong emotions and uncertainty. Through health education people learn to adapt well over time to life changing and stressful situations via health awareness, advocacy and sensitization on coping mechanisms such as social support and social interactions with others, healthy thinking and fostering wellness (American Psychological Association, 2020).
- ii. **Behaviour Change:** Insecurity increases people's exposure to numerous potential threats such as food, energy, displacement and health problems while good practices are of vital importance in addressing such threats. Health education through health advocacy and health sensitization avenues provide individuals with knowledge and skills during insecurity to improve understanding of their bodies, recognize symptoms and engage in preventative practices that reduce the exposure to risk factors such as chronic diseases and physical, social, mental health illness (Dyshelly, et al. 2018).
- iii. **Community Stabilization:** Traumatic event is a shocking, scary or dangerous experience that can affect individual physically, emotionally and mentally. Health education can be tailored to help individuals to manage and prevent traumatic events in the communities that include experiences such as natural disasters example hurricanes, earthquakes and floods, acts of violence such as terrorist attacks, mass shootings, assault, abuse and car crashes or other accidents. It is natural to feel afraid during and after a traumatic situation as fear is part of the body's fight response which helps

individuals in communities avoid or respond to potential danger, individual may experience a range of reactions after trauma including feeling of anxious, sad, trouble concentrating and unnecessary sleeping often which can be mitigated via health awareness, health advocacy and sensitization programmes (National Institute of Mental Health, 2024).

Conclusion

North West has now become a danger zone where banditry and kidnapping activities are more prevalent. People in the region are vulnerable to kidnapping for ransom which concurrently occurs on the high ways, in towns and villages which makes road travelling difficult in the region despite a little or no effort made by the government to mitigate the incidences. Perhaps, this surge of abductions are compounded by hunger, bullying, violation of human right and other form of abuses which inculcate the sense of fear among the abducted victims and their relatives and as a result make them stressful, anxious, depressed and more likely become traumatic which directly or indirectly affect their physical, emotional, mental health and wellbeing. Health education can be tailor to overcome insecurity challenges in North West by enlighten individuals the pros involve in maintenance of peace for sustainable health development.

Recommendations

The paper recommended the following suggestions;

1. Health educators should gear up to provide awareness on security measures in maintenance of health and wellbeing in the face of insecurity in North West Nigeria such as physical, emotional and mental health consciousness.
2. Health educators should emphases the used of coping mechanisms such as physical exercise, social interaction and social support to neutralise stressful, anxious, depressed,

traumatic and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) situations in the face of insecurity in North West Nigeria.

3. Government should enhance more security infrastructure and training of personals that can overcome the concurrent insecurity challenges in North West Nigeria.
4. Policy makers should enact a law for equal opportunities for herders and farmers as well as penalty for any sanction in violating the rule of law.
5. Community members and stake holders should provide proper policing and conflict resolution strategies that can be employ to mitigate the insecurity challenges in North West Nigeria.
6. Government and non-governmental organization should channel their activities in boosting people living standard by creating job opportunities, fairness in governance and maintenance equity and equality will help to clear milieu for insecurity challenges.

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