

INSECURITY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' INTEREST AND ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT IN AGUATA EDUCATION ZONE OF ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

Nwankwo, Madeleine Chinyere

Science Education Department, Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe
University, Awka

Email: mac.nwankwo@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

The study examined Insecurity and its Influence on Secondary School Students' Interest and Academic Engagement in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State. Four research questions and two hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study. The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study comprised all the 8,852 students in all the secondary schools in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State, Nigeria. A sample of 480 students was selected using multi-stage sampling approach. Two instruments were used for data collection, namely, students' interest scale (SIS) and students' academic engagement questionnaire (SAEQ); both structured by the researcher. The SIS contains eight items while the SAEQ contains seven items, making a total of 15 items. The instruments were validated by three experts and tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha which yielded reliability indices of 0.73 and 0.81 for SIS and SAEQ respectively. The collected data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and t-test to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed among others that students' interest and academic engagement were adversely affected by the state of insecurity in the zone. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that government should put all efforts in place to ensure that there is proper security in the area.

Key Words: Insecurity, students' interest, academic engagement.

Introduction

For some years now, Nigeria in general, but especially the south east has witnessed a series of crisis and insecurity, each leading to sustained injuries to the affected, loss of properties and most painfully, loss of life. To this end, Nigeria, according to Ojeleye, Bello, Basira and Abdllahi (2022) is listed as the second most terrorized nation in the world. Anambra State, particularly Aguata Education Zone has been witnessing issues resulting from insecurity that has been eating into the bone marrow of every aspect of human endeavor for some decades now, be it economic, social, political but particularly in the education sector. Human and material resources in education have suffered tremendously. All stakeholders in education especially parents, teachers and students are tensed up, frustrated and depressed as a result of insecurity in the area. As a result of insecurity, students and teachers have been at risk due to fear of kidnapping, loss of lives, bandits and insurgency, stray bullets, abductions and distractions which discourage them from going to school.

Various authors have viewed insecurity in different ways. Igboeli et al. (2022) for instance defined insecurity as absence of psychological feeling or physical absence or presence of situation that gives the child a sense of belonging devoid of every element of fear. Simply put, Achumba (2013) used insecurity to mean lack of safety or the existence of danger, hazard, uncertainty; lack of trust; doubtfulness; inadequately guarded or protected; disturbed; lack of protection and unsafe condition. To Ojukwu (2017), insecurity is a situation where human and national security of a state is compromised by internal or external forces or interests. Insecurity occurs in various forms like terrorism, kidnapping, banditry, assassination, ritual murder, armed robbery, civil disobedience and other forms of violent crimes. Another dimension of insecurity especially in the South-East Geopolitical zone of Nigeria is the issue of sit-at-home and lock down problems on days that Nnamdi Kaluis to appear in court; this has become a canker-worm that is eating into the fabric of education system in the area. Umar et al. (2023) enumerated causes of insecurity to include high rate of unemployment among the teaming youths, poor and bad governance, porous borders and weak security system, bad leadership among others. In a school environment, insecurity can influence students' interest and academic engagement.

Interest is an attitude of eagerness and feeling of concentration or curiosity over something. It is a feeling of wanting to know or learn about something or someone. According to Kalaf-Hughes (2019), academic interest refers to students' positive emotional orientation, curiosity and engagement towards a particular subject which motivates them to invest time, efforts and attention in learning. It is a force that propels the academic achievement of a student. Nwokolo and Chukwuma (2025)

observes that students who are genuinely interested in a subject are more likely to display persistence, use deeper learning strategies and achieve higher academic outcomes and engage more in academic activities.

Academic engagement generally, according to Igboeli et al. (2022), refers to knowledge-related interactions of academic scientists with external organizations. The authors went further to posit that it includes activities such as collaborative research with industries, contract research, consulting and informal ties. For secondary school students, academic engagement refers to commitment to or effortful involvement in the context of academic learning throughout students' entire school experience (Kim et al., 2019). Hodge et al. (2017) described academic engagement as the quality of effort made by students in educationally purposeful activities and which contributes to desired academic outcomes. Students' academic engagement has demonstrated that engaging students in the learning process increases their attention and focus. It also motivates them to practice high level critical thinking skills and promotes meaningful learning and experience. Such engagement demands on students' regular attendance to class, participation in class activities, being punctual to class, carrying out assignment and performing extracurricular activities such as sports and games. Students' activities cannot be successful if these variables are lacking. To this end, the present study sought to examine insecurity and its Influence on Secondary School Students' Interest and Academic Engagement in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State, Nigeria

The study is anchored on Ted Gurr's relative deprivation theory propounded in 1970. According to Gurr, violence likely to develop in a society where the gap between actual and potential expectations exists on wide scale. To him violence derives from high level of discontent caused from relative deprivation. In the context of the present study, the theory, as posited by Umar et al (2023) focuses on insecurity and how it affects the academic performance of students. Hence, insecurity occurs whenever people have a feeling of being self- vulnerable and susceptible to injury or harm particularly for a sustained period as is the case in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra state, Nigeria. This situation is capable of influencing students' interest, academic engagement and of course their over-all effective learning in school environment.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to guide the study

1. What is the influence of insecurity on secondary school students' academic interest in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State?
2. What is the influence of insecurity on secondary school students' academic

engagement in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State?

3. What is the influence of insecurity on secondary school students' academic interest in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State based on gender?
4. What is influence of insecurity on secondary school students' academic engagement in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State based on gender?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant influence of insecurity on male and female secondary school students' academic interest in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State
2. There is no significant influence of insecurity on male and female secondary school students' academic engagement in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State

Methods

A survey research design was adopted for the study. This design, according to Nworgu (2015) aims at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. The study was carried out in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State. The zone is made up of three Local Government Areas namely, Aguata, Orumba-North and Orumba-South. The population of the study was all the 8,852 JSS 2 students in all the government-owned secondary schools in Aguata Education Zone. The sample for the study was 480 students selected using a multi-stage sampling approach. In the first stage, one co-educational school was purposively selected from each of the three local government areas and based on the schools located in the areas most susceptible to insecurity situations. In the selected schools, only JS 3 and SS 3 students were purposively selected because the students have spent reasonable time in the schools and have been living witnesses of these insecurity insurgences. In the next stage, the male and female students were separated into different groups. Finally, from each group, 480 students were proportionately selected and used for the study.

Data was collected using two instruments, namely; students' interest scale (SIS) and students' academic engagement questionnaire (SAEQ) both developed by the researcher. The SIS was eight-item statements seeking information on influence of insecurity on secondary school students' academic interest in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra state. The SAEQ contains seven-item statements used to elicit information on insecurity influence on secondary school students' academic engagement in Aguata education zone of Anambra state, The instruments were validated by three experts and tested for internal consistency using Cronbach alpha statistical tool which yielded reliability indices of 0.73 and 0.81 for AIS and SAEQ respectively. The overall reliability index obtained was 0.74, a value which,

according to Nworgu (2015) is considered high enough for any instrument to be reliable. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level. In answering the research questions, any item with a mean of less than or equal to criterion mean of 2.50 is considered rejected, otherwise it is not rejected. Also, in testing the hypothesis, where the calculated value was less than or equal to the critical value of 1.96, the null hypothesis was rejected, otherwise it was not rejected.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the influence of insecurity on secondary school students' academic interest in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean rating and standard deviation of data collected with respect to the influence of insecurity on secondary school students' academic interest in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State. N=480

S/N	Insecurity and students' academic interest	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	σ	decision
1.	I do not go to school until I am sure it is safe for me to do so	132	201	85	62	2.84	0.88	agree
2.	Security challenged greatly interrupt my school activities	113	271	54	42	2.95	0.72	agree
3.	Once I hear the school bell, my heart begins to beat faster	60	193	151	76	2.49	1.04	disagree
4.	I will prefer to be absent from school at any least opportunity	64	206	121	89	2.51	0.96	agree
5.	I am happy whenever public holiday is declared because, that means no going to school	237	122	56	65	3.12	0.69	agree
6.	Due to fear of insecurity, I sometimes fake illness to ensure I do not go to school.	88	74	96	222	2.06	0.91	agree
7.	I lack concentration in class because, I am always watchful for any sign of unfamiliar movement from around us.	229	158	53	40	3.20	1.13	agree
8.	I go to school reluctantly since it is not certain what I will meet there	92	24	576	67	2.75	0.86	agree
Grand mean						2.74		agree

KEY: N=number of respondents; SA=strongly agree; A=agree; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree; $\bar{x}$ = mean; σ = standard deviation.

The result in Table 1 reveals that majority of the respondents agree that insecurity influences their academic interest negatively. This is because, except for items 3 and 6, the respondents had mean ratings greater than the cut-off mean of 2.5. The grand mean of 2.74 is also greater than 2.5

Research Question 2: What is the influence of insecurity on students' academic engagement in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State?

Table 2: Mean scores and standard deviation of data collected with respect to the

influence of insecurity on secondary school students' academic engagement in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State. N = 480

S/N	Insecurity and students' academic engagement	SA	A	D	SD	χ	df	Remark
1.	I now hide my talent lest I will be asked to go and represent my school in competitions	69	81	200	130	2.19	0.71	disagree
2.	I no longer get fully involved in inter-school debates because I am afraid of travelling nowadays	164	121	206	92	2.74	0.93	agree
3.	I am discouraged about going for excursions for fear of being kidnapped or molested	226	197	52	5	3.34	0.99	agree
4.	My zeal for sporting activities Has reduced since the incidence of insecurity	43	77	211	147	2.03	1.21	disagree
5.	I am fearful about insecurity It influences my academic engagements in many way	131	202	58	89	2.78	0.68	agree
6.	Due to insecurity issues, I no longer dedicate enough time in developing projects that can expose me to the international world	51	199	162	68	2.49	0.82	disagree
7.	For me, it is not important actively getting involved in academic activities since the future is cloudy	88	185	147	60	2.63	1.12	agree
Grand Mean						2.60		agree

The result in Table 2 reveals that many of the respondents agree that insecurity influences their academic engagement in a negative way. This is because, except for items 1, 4 and 6, the respondents had mean ratings greater than the cut-off mean of 2.5. The value of the grand mean is 2.60 which is also greater than the criterion mean of 2.5

Research Question 3: What is the influence of insecurity on male and female secondary school students' academic interest in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra state?

Table 3: Mean ratings and standard deviation of data collected with respect to the influence of insecurity on secondary school students' academic interest in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State based on gender.

Gender	N	Cluster Mean	Std. Deviation
Male	157	2.62	0.78
Female	323	3.66	0.63

The result as presented in Table 4 reveals that female students get discouraged more easily in pursuing academic activities than the male students. The reason for the conclusion is because female student had a higher mean of 3.44 than the males with a mean score of 2.01. The females also were more homogenous in their responses than the males as the females had a lower standard deviation score

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of insecurity on male and female secondary school students' academic interest in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State

Table 5: t-test analysis on the influence of insecurity on male and female secondary school students' academic interest in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State

Gender	Number of subjects	mean score	σ	df	t-cal	t-crit	alpha
Male	123	2.62	0.78				
Female	357	3.66	0.63	478	1.73	1.96	0.05

Data presented in Table 5 showed that there exists a marked difference as indicated by a mean of 2.62 ($\sigma = 0.78$) for the male students and a mean of 3.66 ($\sigma = 0.63$) for the female students.

The calculated t-value of 1.73 which is less than the critical value of 1.96 at 478 degree of freedom also shows that there is a significant difference in the rating of male and female students on the influence of insecurity on their academic interest. The null hypothesis one of no significant influence of insecurity on male and female students' academic interest was therefore rejected indicating that there was a significant difference between the rating of the two groups.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant influence of insecurity on male and female secondary school students' academic engagement in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State

Table 6: t-test analysis on the influence of insecurity on male and female secondary school students' academic engagement in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State

Gender	number of subjects	mean score	σ	df	t-cal	t-table	alpha
Male	123	2.01	0.81				
Female	357	3.44	0.74	478	0.34	1.96	0.05

Table 6 showed that there exists a marked difference as indicated by a mean of 2.01 ($\sigma=0.81$) for the male students and a mean of 3.44 ($\sigma=0.74$) for the female students. The calculated t-value of 0.34 which is less than the critical value of 1.96 at 478 degree of freedom also shows that there is a significant difference in the rating of male and female students on the influence of insecurity on their academic engagement. The null hypothesis two of no significant influence of insecurity on male and female students' academic engagement was therefore rejected indicating that there was a significant difference between the rating of male and female students on the influence of insecurity on their academic engagement.

Discussion

The result of the study as presented in Table 1 reveals that insecurity insurgence reduces students' interest in academic work. This is inferred on the basis that respondents all agree with six out of the eight items listed with mean rating greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. Furthermore, the grand mean of 2.74 confirms the finding. The finding agrees with that of Bala (2021) who in her study on influence of insecurity on academic performance of secondary school students in Benue state reported that students precisely lose interest in school and academic activities which eventually lead to truancy and boys leaving schools to take up trading while girls drop out and settle for marriage. Supporting this assertion further, Anyanwu et al. (2023) reported that insecurity could be a factor to examination tension, truancy, poor attendance to school, absent-mindedness and loss of interest on school activities and poor academic performance by students among others

The result as presented in Table 2 shows that fear of insecurity insurgence in a big way has reduced students' academic engagements in Aguata Education Zone. The conclusion was drawn because the respondents all agreed with four out of seven item statements, each having a mean rating greater than 2.50, except for item numbers 3, 4 and 6. The grand mean of 2.60 also affirms the result. The result concurs well with that of Igboeli et al. (n.d) who observed that school insecurity glossily disrupts students' academic engagement and has a significant negative effect on students' academic engagement. The result also agrees with that of Achilike (2017) who reported among others that insecurity has a significant effect on the socio-emotional development of secondary school students, and of course, their academic engagement. Still in line with our findings, Ojeleye et al. (2022) discovered that among others, students as a result of insecurity skip lessons and school activities; they lose interest in academic activities which may eventually lead to students' dropout from school.

The findings from Tables 3 and 5 revealed that female students more easily lose interest in academic endeavours when compared with their male counterparts. The

result is at variance with that of Ojukwu (2015) who posited that no significant difference ($p > .05$) was found between male and female students' behavior due to school environment insecurity. Although to the best of our knowledge, though researchers reported loss of interest among secondary school students, not many of them discussed if males or females were more adversely affected.

Table 4 and 6 shows that females equally readily will dis-connect themselves from academic engagements at the face of insecurity. The findings are in contrast with that of Ojeleye (2015) who reported that both male and female were equally affected by insecurity of school environment as that often end in students dropping out of school, with boys moving into trading while girls settle down earlier in marriage.

Conclusion

Insecurity issues in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State has been a worrisome development in recent years to all, especially stakeholders in education. The present survey on 'insecurity and its influence on secondary school students' interest and academic engagement in Aguata Education Zone of Anambra State' shows that incidences of insecurity that abound in the zone has grossly resulted in secondary school students' loss of interest in academic endeavors in general. It was also observed from the study as averred by the respondents that there is a drastic reduction on the extent to which they are willing to be involved in academic engagement activities outside their own school environment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were proffered:

1. Parents and other stakeholders in education should do more to inculcate the right attitude and values in the life of the students in order to bring the issue of insecurity being perpetrated by the youths to the barest minimum if not completely eradicated.
2. Local community inhabitants should report promptly any strange face hovering around especially around school environments to the community leaders and vigilantes and action should be taken promptly and accordingly.
3. Government at all levels should try as much as possible to improve security conditions in the zone by taking the personal security of its citizens seriously.

References

- Acheliike, B. D. (2017). Teachers' perception of on the influence of insecurity on socio-Emotional development of secondary school children in Owerri Metropolis, Imo State. *International journal of current research*, 9 (3), 48452-48455.
- Achumba, I. C., Igbomereho, O. S. and Akpor-Robaro, M. O. (2023). Insecurity challenges in Nigeria and the implications for business activities and sustainable development. *Journal of economics and sustainable development*, 4 (2), 77 – 99.
- Anyanwu, C., Ipeh, J. N., Eluemuno, A. I., &Ogunsola, A. O. (2023). Influence of insecurity on undergraduate students' examination taking behavior in the universities of south-east geopolitical zone. *International journal of management, social sciences peace and conflict studies (IJMSSPCS)*, 6 (20), 99-107.
- Bala, M. (2021). Influence of insecurity on students' academic performance in in public schools in Benue state. Education project topics retrieved from <https://www.iprojectdownload.com>
- Igboeli, C. C., Obikezie, N., Obi, I. E., Okafor, O. and Obikezie, N. A. (n.d.). school insecurity and students' academic engagement in Nigeria public university. *COOU journal of educational research* 6(2), 19-24.
- Kalaf-Hughes, N. (2019). Reaching students with low interest: subject matter interest and perception s of open educational resources in an introductory American government course. *Journal of political science education*, 28, 1-27
- Kim, H. J., Hong, A. J., and Song, H. D. (2019). The roles of academic engagement and digital readiness in students' achievement in university e-learning environments. *International journal of educational technology in higher education*, 16, 1-18
- Hodge, B., Wright, B and Bennett, P. (2017). The role of grit in determining engagement and academic outcomes for university students. *Research in higher education*, 50(4), 448-460
- Nwokolo, C. and Chukwuma, R. N. (2025). Academic interest as predictor of secondary school students' academic achievement in English language and mathematics in delta state. *unizik journal of educational research and policy studies*, 20 (2), 47-56
- Nwonyi, S. K., Friday, N. A., Oginyi, R. C. and Alu, J. I. (2019). Influence of social media and goal orientation on academic engagement of students. *Journal of Nigeria psychological association*, 1 (1), 88 – 101.
- Ojeleye, C. I., Bello, L. K., Basira, M. G. and Abdullahi, M. (2022). Insecurity as predictor of students' learning in Zamfara state, Nigeria. *SER*, 21 (1), 66 – 78.
- Ojukwu, M. O. (2015). Influence of insecurity of school environment on the behavior of secondary school students in Isiala-Ngwa North and South Local Government Areas of Abia State. *International journal of education and literacy studies*, 3(4), 49-55.
- Ojukwu, M. O. (2017). Effect of insecurity of school environment on the academic performance of secondary school students in Imo State. *International journal of education and literacy studies*, 5 (1), 20 – 28.
- Umar, M. K., Ibrahim, U. K., and Adamu, I. (2023). Effects of insecurity on students' academic performance in Katsina State schools- A case study of the Frontline local government areas. *Modern journal of social sciences and humanities*, 18, 1-9.