

SECURITY CHALLENGES, GIRL-CHILD ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN RABAH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, SOKOTO STATE

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of security challenges on girl –child enrollment and completion in primary schools in Rabah Local Government Area of Sokoto state, Nigeria. Persistent insecurity, including banditry and kidnapping has posed significant barriers to access and successful completion of basic education, particularly for girls. The study adopted a mixed method research design combining quantitative analysis of school enrollment and completion records with qualitative data obtained through interviews with members of the Parent Teachers Association. Cronbach Alpha was used and the reliability index of 0.73 and 0.82 was ensured. The data collected were analyzed via frequency and percentages as well as content analysis. Findings indicate that insecurity challenges significantly reduces girl child enrollment and contributes to increased dropout rates. Parental attitudes, unsafe routes to school and inadequate security infrastructure within school environments were identified as major influencing factors. The paper recommends that improving school safety through community based security initiatives, strengthened safe school programs, and gender responsive educational policies is essential to enhancing girl child participation and completion in primary education. The paper concludes that addressing security challenges remains critical to achieving equitable and sustainable basic education in the study area.

Keywords: Security Challenges, Girl-Child Education, Enrollment, Completion, Primary School

Introduction:

Girl-child education has been widely recognized as a critical tool for national development, poverty reduction, gender equality, and social transformation. Educating girls contributes significantly to improved health outcomes, reduced child marriage, enhanced economic productivity, and better participation of women in governance and decision-making processes (UNESCO, 2022). In Nigeria, despite government policies such as the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, the national Girl-Child policy and the National Policy on Education, many girls still face barriers to education, particularly in Northern Nigeria where socio-cultural practices, poverty, and insecurity continue to hinder school attendance and completion. The efforts of UNICEF and other development partners have helped in tackling the problem of out-of-school girl-child. The reduction of the out of school children rate in Sokoto state was partly due to a UNICEF program that helped enrol 418,614 girls in school and a state run non-formal learning system that helped send another 200,000 children back to school. However, despite this progress, the state still grapples with a significant out of school children crisis, particularly in conflict-

affected areas (UNICEF, 2022). About 77% of children in the state lack access to education, especially those in areas plagued by banditry and kidnappings. The National Bureau of Statistics reports that insecurity remains a major obstacle to education in these regions (NBS, 2023). The rise of insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, communal conflicts, and attacks on schools has created an atmosphere of fear and instability within the educational sector. These security threats have created fear among parents and guardians, leading many to withdraw their daughters from school or refuse to enrol them altogether due to concerns over safety. In some instances, insecurity has resulted in school closures, displacement of families, disruption of academic activities, and psychological trauma among pupils, all of which negatively affect school attendance and completion.

The frequent security challenges in Rabah Local Government may impact on the education of children, especially girls. In addition, some existing cultural norms, poverty, and early marriage already pose barriers to girls' education. This prevailing security situation is likely to exacerbate the challenges faced by girl child in attending school. The implication of insecurity on girl-child education are numerous ranging from abduction, massive school drop-out and destruction of educational facilities and infrastructure resulting in early child marriage, child labor and long term economic exclusion of girl-child.

Although studies have examined girl-child education and insecurity in Nigeria generally such as Ayinla Belloh and Kankia (2023), on the impact of insecurity on students' enrolment, attendance and retention in secondary schools in Katsina State, Nigeria from 2017-2022 and Ojukwu (2017) on Effect of Insecurity of School Environment on the Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Imo State Nigeria, limited empirical attention has been given to how security challenges specifically influence girl-child enrollment and completion in primary schools within Rabah Local Government Area of Sokoto State. Consequently, there is insufficient localized data to guide effective policy formulation and interventions aimed at improving educational access and retention for girls in the area. It is against this background that this study seeks to investigate the relationship between security challenges and girl-child enrollment and completion in primary schools in Rabah Local Government Area, Sokoto State, Nigeria.

The study seeks to find answers to the following research questions:

- i. What is the nature of security challenges prevalent in Rabah local government?
- ii. How does security challenge affect the Enrollment of girl-child education in primary school?
- iii. What are the causes of security challenges on the completion of girl-child education in primary schools in Rabah local government?

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed method research design and the population of the study comprised all head teachers, teachers of public primary schools in Rabah Local Government of Sokoto State. There are 103 public primary schools out of which only 93 are functional. The population of the study comprises of 93 head teachers, 481 teachers and 919 parents who are PTA members in Rabah Local Government of Sokoto State (SUBEB Sokoto State 2022 School Census). The total population for the study therefore is, one thousand four hundred and ninety-three (1,493).

The sample size for the study stands at 168 consisting of 21 head teachers, 84 teachers and 63 PTA members (parents). This study adopted multi stage sampling in its approach. The first stage involves selection of the five wards which was done using purposive sampling techniques. The basis here is that these wards are more accessible and relatively safe as most of the victims of

banditry moved to these wards for safety. The second stage involved in the selection of twenty-one (21) head teachers which was proportionately selected from the public primary schools within the wards that their schools are functioning formed part of the sample. All the eighty-four (84) teachers within the selected 21 functional public primary schools were selected. The third stage, involved selection of 3 PTA members who are parents from each of the 21 selected schools totaling 63. All categories of the sample were selected using simple proportionate technique. The whole of the teachers from the 21 schools were selected because, the number of the teachers are relatively small.

For the purpose of the study, the researcher developed 2 instrument for data collection titled "Security Challenges on Girl Child Education Questionnaire" (SCGCEQ) to be administered to Teachers and head teachers and Security Challenges and Girl Child Education Focus Group Discussion (SCGCE FGD) for the PTA. The data for this study was analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis of frequency count, percentages and mean using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The descriptive statistical analysis of frequency counts and percentages was used in analyzing principals' and teachers' demographic information, while data related to research questions was analyzed using the percentage to answer the research questions.

The FGD responses was transcribed and translated into English Language. The transcript was subdivided and coded. Queries was carried out to establish relationship or otherwise between views of the respondents. Content analysis was conducted so as to establish the most repeated responses.

Results:

Research Question One

What is the nature of security challenges prevalent in Rabah local Government Area?

This research question was answered using item 1 to 7 on the head Teachers and Teachers instrument (SCGCEQ)

Table 1 Head Teachers and Teachers response on the Nature of Security Challenges Prevalent in Rabah Local Government N (105)

ITEMS	Agree		Disagree		Decision
	F	%	F	%	
Armed Banditry	85	81%	20	19%	Very High
Kidnapping	77	73%	28	27%	Very High
Attack on Schools by Gunmen	33	31%	72	69%	Low
Attack on Markets	37	35%	68	65%	Low
Girls intimidation and Harassment	85	81%	20	19%	Very High
Threats of abduction of girls while going to school	92	88%	13	12%	Very High
Rape and Sexual Harassment	19	18%	86s	82%	Low

Field work, 2025

Table 10 presents the responses of head teachers and teachers on the nature of security challenges prevalent in Rabah Local Government Area of Sokoto State. The responses indicate that several forms of insecurity significantly affect the educational environment, particularly the education of the girl-child.

Armed banditry is one of the major security challenges in the area, as 85 respondents representing 81% agreed that it is prevalent, while only 20 respondents representing 19% disagreed. This suggests that banditry has become a serious threat within the study area and may contribute to fear, displacement, and disruption of school activities.

Similarly, kidnapping was identified as another serious security concern. A total of 77 respondents representing 73% agreed that kidnapping is prevalent in Rabah Local Government Area, while 28 respondents representing 27% disagreed. The high level of agreement indicates that the fear of kidnapping may discourage parents from allowing their daughters to attend school regularly.

The table further shows that attacks on schools by gunmen were considered low, as only 33 respondents representing 31% agreed, while the majority of 72 respondents representing 69% disagreed. This implies that although attacks on schools may occur occasionally, they are not as widespread as other forms of insecurity in the area.

In the same vein, attacks on markets were also rated low. Only 37 respondents representing 35% agreed that attacks on markets are common, while 68 respondents representing 65% disagreed. This finding suggests that market-related violence is not a dominant security challenge in the area compared to banditry and kidnapping. Furthermore, intimidation and harassment of girls emerged as a major concern. The table shows that 85 respondents representing 81% agreed that girls experience intimidation and harassment, while 20 respondents representing 19% disagreed. This indicates that many girls may face threats, fear, and psychological trauma, which could negatively affect their school attendance, concentration, and academic performance.

The findings also reveal that threats of abduction of girls while going to school constitute the most prevalent security challenge identified in the study. An overwhelming majority of 92 respondents representing 88% agreed with this statement, while only 13 respondents representing 12% disagreed. This suggests that insecurity specifically targeting girls poses a major obstacle to girl-child education in Rabah Local Government Area.

However, rape and sexual harassment were rated low by the respondents. Only 19 respondents representing 18% agreed that rape and sexual harassment are prevalent, while 86 respondents representing 82% disagreed. This may indicate that such cases are either less common, underreported, or not openly discussed within the study area.

Going by the analysis above it is evidently clear that the finding from the research question one which revealed that the nature of security challenge is centered on the threats of abduction of girls while going to school is prevalent in Rabah Local Government. A study conducted by Rufai (2023) corroborated the current study which revealed that members of community in Rabah Local Government of Gandi ward were forced to leave their homes as a result of girl's abduction and armed banditry. The result further indicates that about 12, 378 members from different part of Rabah were displaced. The study also is in line with that of Danjuma, Aliyu, and Aliero. (2024) on the Effect of Banditry on School Attendance among Students in Sakaba Local Government Area, Kebbi State, Nigeria. The results revealed that there is, fear and anxiety which banditry creates among children leaving them with the feelings that they could be attacked by bandits on their way to school. The results also indicate that children always leave the house in the morning before school hours because they do not want to go to school. The current study is also in line with the study conducted by Ishaq, Yohana & Ajibade (2022) on Impact of Rural Banditry on Educational Development in Nigeria. A critical Review The results revealed among other things that insecurity (armed banditry) cause displacement and disruption of school activities many pupils were force to leave their homes and stop going to schools. Similarly, this finding corroborates the study of

Ayinla, Belloh and Kankia (2023), who found that banditry, cattle rustling, and abduction were major forms of insecurity affecting educational activities in Katsina State. Similarly, Abdullahi, Atsua and Amuda (2019) established that insecurity caused by Boko Haram insurgency created fear and instability that negatively affected school activities in Maiduguri Metropolis. The findings are also consistent with Ojukwu (2017), who identified violent activities and insecurity within school environments as serious threats to students' education.

This finding is strongly supported by the Human Security Theory of Mahbub ul Haq (1994), which emphasizes that security should not only focus on territorial protection but also on the safety and wellbeing of individuals. The theory stresses personal security, community security, and environmental security as important dimensions of human development. In the context of this study, the constant fear of kidnapping, harassment, and bandit attacks threatens the personal security of girls and creates an unsafe educational environment. Consequently, insecurity becomes a direct barrier to educational participation and human development.

FGD Responses of the PTA members on research question 1

"Security challenges have become so persistent in our community. We live in a state of fear and apprehension. Our lives, properties are under threat of imminent attacks any moment and anytime" (Participant 1).

A member of the Parent Teachers Association also averred that"

"Our Local Government is now a hotspot of insecurity in form of armed banditry, kidnapping, cattle rustling, rape and assault particularly of women and children" (Participant 2).

Another member of the community leaders stated that:

"Our livelihood and our children education has been seriously undermined by the security challenges, we hardly go to farm or go to nearby village market for business and our wards particularly the Girl-Child are in a state of fear of going out talk less of going to school" (Participant 6)

One of the security officials who participated in the FGD stressed that:

" security challenges have negatively affected education and schooling of children in almost all the wards in Rabah Local Government and its impact on Girl-child education is serious thereby compounding the already low admission of girls in primary schools in Rabah." (Participant 3)

Research question Two

How does a security challenge affect the Enrollment of Girl Child Education in Rabah local Government Area? This research question was answered using item 8 to 17 on the head Teachers and Teachers instrument (SCGCEQ).

Table 2 Head Teachers and Teachers responses on how security challenge affects the Enrollment of Girl Child Education in Primary School in Rabah Local Government

ITEMS	Agree		Disagree		Remarks
	F	%	F	%	
Since inception of armed banditry the enrollment of girl-child has drastically reduced.	88	84%	17	16%	Very High
Schools structures are affected by banditry in the area	102	97%	3	3%	Very High
Banditry activities affected schools to the extent that parent are no longer enroll children Schools	75	71%	30	29%	Very High
Banditry has led parent and communities to lose interest in formal education	79	75%	26	25%	Very High
Despite security challenges schools have initiatives that promote the enrollment of girl-child	78	74%	27	26%	Very High
Relocation of communities is among the barriers that prevent girl-child enrolling in schools	87	83%	18	17%	Very High
Fear of the unknown to girl-child affect the enrollment of female pupils in your school	75	71%	30	29%	Very High
Majority of people have left their communities due to security challenges	87	83%	18	17	Very High
Girl-child safety is not guarantee either in school or on their way to school due to rising insecurity	83	79%	22	21%	Very High
Pupils in IDPs enroll into school centers opened learning centers within the IDPs camps	44	42%	61	58%	High

Field work, 2025

On the assertion that since inception of armed banditry, the enrollment of Girl-Child has drastically reduced, majority of the respondent (84%) strongly agreed and agreed while 16% disagree and strongly disagreed.

On whether school structures were affected by banditry, 97% strongly agreed and agreed and only 3% of the respondents disagree and strongly disagree.

On the assertion that banditry activities affected schools to the extent that parent no longer enroll children in schools, majority of the respondents (71%) are in agreement while 29% disagree.

Furthermore, 75% of Head teachers and teachers are in agreement with the statement that banditry has led parent and communities to lose interest in formal education while 25% did not share the same view.

On whether schools have initiatives that promote enrollment of Girl-Child despite insecurity, 83% of the respondents agreed while 17% disagree. Majority of the respondents (83%) agreed that relocation of communities is among the barriers that prevent girl-child from enrolling in schools. Fear of the unknown to girl child affect the enrollment of female pupil in schools was agreed and disagreed by 71% and 29% of the respondents respectively. On the assertion that majority of people have left their communities due to security challenges, 83% agreed and 17% did not agree with the assertion. More than two-third of the respondents (79%) agreed that Girl-child safety is not guaranteed either in schools or on their way to school as a result of insecurity. A little above 20% of the respondents (21% to be precise) shared a different opinion.

Finally, on the issue of enrollment, majority of the respondents (58%) disagree with the view that pupils in IDPs enroll into school learning centers within the IDPs Camps while 42% were in agreement with the statement.

In line with the analysis above, the findings from research question 2 revealed that security challenge had negatively affected girl child school enrollment in Rabah Local Government. These could be noticed from the responses of the respondents that from the inception of armed banditry the percentage is 84% have indicated the dropped in the enrollment of girl child in Rabah Local Government. The study also indicated that the school structures has been affected considering the fact that 97% shows how seriously school structures are being affected in Rabah Local Government. This factor causes low enrollment of girl child to schools. The challenge of banditry in this study has also indicated parent loss interest in enrolling their children to school most especially girl child. These could be affirming from the 71% from the respondents. It is evident that banditry activities have crippled school activities in Rabah Local Government. A study carried out by Ayinla, Belloh and Kankia (2023) on the impact of insecurity on students' enrolment, attendance and retention in secondary schools in Katsina State, Nigeria from 2017-2022 is in line with the current study which revealed that; the scourge of insecurity in the form of banditry, cattle rustling, and abduction constitutes negative impact on students' enrolment; around Local Government Areas in Katsina State. In another study conducted by Odenigbo and Eze (2019) on Factors Affecting the Girl Child Education in Enugu State Nigeria. The study differs in terms of focus even though there are targeting factors that affecting student's enrollment schools. The result of the findings revealed that those factors such as peer in fluency, quest for money and material things, unfriendly situation of school, effect of social media, low level of understanding of sex education and violence against girls are responsible for poor enrolment or high level of out of school girl in schools. This finding agrees with Zillah (2015), who found that insecurity and violence reduced pupils' enrolment in primary schools in Kenya. The result also supports Abubakar (2023), who identified poor security arrangements as one of the factors discouraging girl-child education in Yobe State. Likewise, Odenigbo and Eze (2019) reported that insecurity-related challenges contribute to the increasing number of out-of-school girls in Nigeria.

The outcome of the Focus Group Discussion on how security challenges affects enrollment of Girl-Child Education in the study area shares the perception with the outcome of the questionnaire administered to head teachers and teachers.

Responses of PTA members on research question two

According to one participant

*"Security challenges have done a great damage to girl-child enrollment.
Parents are scared of allowing their children to go to school for fear of attack*

by bandits. This has reduced the enrollment of Girl-Child in primary schools.”
(Participant 8).

Another participant averred that:

“in spite of all efforts put in place by the PTA, to convince a lot of parents to enroll their female wards in schools most parent ignored such call and in areas where schools were shut such as Kurya and Gandi A issue of enrollment did not even arise” (Participants 10).

A religious leader also stated that:

“Security challenges have caused a lot of parents to relocate to perceived safer areas and this have resulted in low enrollment of Girl-Child” (Participant 9).

Another religious leader stated that:

“Education is important but without safety many families will hold back their daughters. If security situation did not improve, the future of these girls will remain bleak and uncertain” (Participants 15)

Research question Three

How security challenges do affects the completion of Girl Child Education in Rabah local Government Area? This research question was answered using item 27 to 36 on the head Teachers and Teachers instrument (SCGCEQ).

Beginning with the view that completion of girl-child in primary schools has drastically dropped because of security challenges. Response to this view shows 96% agreement and only 4% disagreement. On whether the attitude of parents coupled with security challenges made girl-child not to complete the duration of school, 72% shows agreement.

On attitude of teachers due to insecurity had resulted in the increase in number of non-completion of girl-child education in the study area, majority of the respondents (53%) disagree while 47% agree. On the question whether Government is unserious in the protection of life and properties create fear and worsen the security situation in Rabah local government, 94% of the respondents were in agreement as against 6% that disagree. Question on Schools activities from the teachers and couple with security challenges because the inability to complete school among the girl-child generated 61% agreement and 39% disagreement.

Still on completion, issues relating to religion and culture contributed girl-child not completing schools; the responses indicated split 50%-50% agreement and disagreement among the respondents. On whether IDP learners are privilege to complete their basic education, 75% of the respondents agree while 25% disagree.

Over two-third of the respondents (78%) agreed that Security challenges affected parent's business activities and caused non completion of girl-child primary school education.

Finally, 69% of the sampled respondents agreed that despite community efforts on security challenges some girl-child are still unable to complete their studies and 31% held a contrary view with those who agreed with the assertion.

Table 3 Head Teachers and Teachers responses on the causes of security challenges on the completion of girl child education in primary schools in Rabah Local Government

N (105)

ITEMS	Agree		Disagree		Remarks
	F	%	F	%	
The completion of girl-child in primary schools has drastically drop because of security challenge	101	96%	4	4%	Very High
The attitude of the parents couple with security challenge made girl-child not complete the duration of primary schools in Rabah local government	76	72%	29	28%	Very High
Attitude of the teachers due to security challenges had increase in number non completion of girl-child primary schools	49	47%	56	53%	High
Government unserious in the protection of life and properties create fear and worsen the security situation in Rabah local government	99	94%	6	6%	Very High
Schools activities from the teachers and couple with security challenges cause the inability to complete school among the girl-child	64	61%	41	39%	High
Issues relating to religion and culture contributed for not girl-child to complete primary schools	52	50%	53	50%	High
IDPs learners are privilege to complete their basic level of education	79	75%	26	25%	Very High
Security challenges affected parents business activities and caused non completion of girl-child primary school education	82	78%	23	22%	Very High
Despite community members efforts on security challenges but some girl-child are unable to complete their primary school education	72	69%	33	31%	Very High

Authors Field work, 2025

The findings from the research question 3 revealed that parent's attitudes and lack of government commitment in the protection of lives in insecurity prone areas made girl-child not to complete their duration of school in Rabah local government. This could be understood as a result of responses from the results which indicated there is low completion of girl child in primary schools because of insecurity with 96%. At the same time the results further indicate a serious challenge from parent's attitude which hinder the girl child completion of primary schools as at when due. This finding supports Ojukwu (2017), who found that insecurity in school environments contributed to school dropout among students, especially girls who eventually settled for marriage. The finding also corroborates Femi (2011), who revealed that many girls dropped out of school and engaged in alternative economic activities due to challenging social and economic

conditions. Similarly, Ifeyinwa, Chukwuemeka and Nwaru (2023) found that insecurity disrupted academic activities and forced some students to abandon their education.

Still in support of the findings of this study, Save the Children, (2020) cited in Nwabuwe (2024) revealed that conflict has an impact on academic performance, leading to school closures and student transfers. Girls are negatively affected by these barriers and face increased barriers to accessing education. The report from UNICEF (2021) indicated widespread of insecurity and has cause the closure of schools particularly in an affected insecurity area which resulted of closing over 1,500 schools in Northern Nigeria due to safety concerns and depriving thousands of girl child access to education and completion at the same time.

Responses of the FGD conducted on research question four

“Insecurity has forced a lot of girl-child not to complete their education mostly out of fear of imminent abduction or attack. Also destruction of schools by the bandits resulted in the closure of such school and that brought to an end the educational pursuit of a girl-child” (Participant 18).

A community leader also added that:

“Relocation of parents to perceived safer areas also affects the completion of girl-child education. In some instances, the parents relocate as Internally Displaced Persons and are housed in some cases in a camp or schools elsewhere” (Participant 17).

A member of the security personnel also averred that:

“A lot of parents have lost confidence in the ability of Government to handle security challenges squarely. Attacks are now more frequent without any sign of relief or protection from the government. This made parents to withdraw their girl-child from school as a form safety measure, thus, affecting girl-child education completion” (Participant 16).

A religious leader in the community added that:

“Security challenges have forced parents to marry off their female children rather than allowing them to complete their education.” (Participant 15).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that insecurity constitutes a major challenge to girl-child education in Rabah Local Government Area of Sokoto State. The study established that armed banditry, kidnapping, intimidation and harassment of girls, as well as threats of abduction while going to school, are the most prevalent security challenges affecting the area. These security threats have created fear, instability, and uncertainty within communities, thereby disrupting educational activities and limiting access to education for girls.

The study further concluded that insecurity has negatively affected girl-child educational enrolment, and completion in the study area. Many parents are reluctant to enroll or allow their daughters to continue schooling because of fear of attacks, kidnapping, and other forms of violence. Consequently, insecurity has contributed to increased school dropout, low educational participation, and reduced educational progression among girl-child in the study area. The findings also revealed that insecurity not only affects the educational development of the girl-child but also undermines broader social and national development goals. When girls are denied

access to safe and uninterrupted education, the society experiences setbacks in human capital development, gender equality, poverty reduction, and sustainable development.

In a nutshell, promoting girl-child education in insecurity-prone areas requires not only educational policies but also effective security interventions that guarantee the safety and protection of learners, teachers, and school communities. Ensuring a secure educational environment is essential for improving girls' access to quality education and achieving sustainable national development in Nigeria.

Recommendations:

- i. Sokoto state government should take adequate measures to improve and enhance the security architecture in states and local government areas bedeviled with security challenges.
- ii. The Sokoto state government, community members and all security agencies should urgently intensify efforts to identify areas most affected by security challenges. Schools should be relocated to safer or completely secure locations that are accessible to the girl-child in order to retain current enrollment and create opportunities for more girls to attend school.
- iii. Parents and the government must change their attitudes towards protecting lives and property. They should ensure that all security challenges within Rabah Local Government Area are thoroughly addressed so that the girl child is able to complete her basic Education successfully.

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