


Chapter 25

Ecofeminism and Girl Child Education in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract

One of the current issues in the Nigerian educational system has been implementing policies that will address people's environmental, psychological, social, and material demands. The implications of inadequate implementation of Nigerian educational policies for educational development, particularly as it affects the future of the girl child in the Northern part of the country, are imperative. There have been several incidences of kidnapping and abduction, particularly in Northern Nigeria, and there appears to be no end in sight to this dreadful menace. The qualitative approach of in-depth interviews, media reports, and reconstructive argumentation is used in this research. The findings exposed the government's insensitivity to some critical environmental measures, particularly in schools. They highlighted the interconnectedness of safety, security, and schoolgirls, specifically the strategies that could be implemented to ensure a safe teaching and learning environment. It proposes an ecofeminist philosophical position to address the neglect of environmental learning infrastructures, reflected in the series of abduction and sexual abuses of schoolgirls, particularly in Northern Nigeria. The study recommended a review of the Educational Policy in Nigeria and its implementation in a bid to ensure adequate security measures for the girl child such that an egalitarian society is achieved.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Educational Policies, Egalitarian, Girl child, School Safety

Introduction

It has been acknowledged globally that education is one of the most profitable investments a family, community, society, country and nation can make because it is life-changing. This awareness stems from the recognition of the values of education that help to develop an individual's full potential, irrespective of age, status or gender, in a world where concepts such as justice, equality, leadership or even a good healthcare system are believed to be foundational to the running of an ideal society. Educating a girl child can kick-start a virtuous development circle. Numerous studies have shown that educated girls are less likely to marry early, have healthier children, earn more money, invest it back into their families and communities, and actively participate in the leadership of their communities and nations (King & Winthrop, 2015). Achieving gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment via high-quality education is one of the sustainable development objectives, specifically the fourth, which addresses both the present and the future (UN, 2015a).

At the 4th United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 (UN, 1995), the relationship between women and the environment was firmly established on a global scale. The discussion of 'women and the environment' was one of the conference's important areas of concern. All people live in cultures that strongly emphasise nature's dominance. King (1987) highlights that as Western civilisation and the scientific revolution developed, nature was dominated by constructing nuclear power plants without any provisions for waste disposal and launching satellites into space without any plans for retrieval. This is supported by Merchant (1960), who states that nature was depleted of her abilities and attributes and reduced to natural resources to be exploited by man. She argues further that this scientific revolution which she called 'the death of nature', had a detrimental effect on women. This could be a significant fact for women because, since women are believed to be closer to nature, it is a starting point to end the domination of nature. Consequently, if society ceases to alter nature, then there will be an end to the domination of women by men; in the same vein, this study identifies the improvement of some environmental factors that are necessary for ensuring the safety and security of schoolgirls as a possible way of ending insecurity and violence against schoolgirls. While it is critical to provide great education for schoolgirls, environmental aspects should be implemented to improve their safety and security (UNICEF, 2006).

Advocacy on education for the girl child has also been on the increase in recent times to ensure better lives for girls across Africa. There have been efforts by individuals and governments to ensure that the girl child is not denied her right to quality education. Children contribute significantly to

the nation's human resource and can be optimally enhanced by providing a safe and appropriate educational environment. The benefits of educating a girl child must be balanced. Therefore, it is important to take all measures to ensure the safety and security of schoolgirls. Barr et al. (2009) argue that providing children with a secure educational setting is commonly thought of as safeguarding and that it is the responsibility of adults to ensure a secure physical setting for children's learning. For instance, Akiba et al. (2002) point out that the safety and security of schoolgirls enhances their interest in learning and increases their enrolment in school.

The problem of insecurity of schoolgirls through kidnap and abduction has remained persistent, especially in Nigeria, and there seems to be no clue to ending this worrisome menace. Safety, which involves eliminating physical harm, and security as a state of not being threatened physically or emotionally eluded most schoolgirls in some parts of Nigeria, raising the fundamental question of the importance that Nigerian society attaches to the safety and security of the schoolgirls, drawing from the experience of Chibok Girls Borno State, Dapchi Yobe State, Kankare, Katsina State, Kagara, Niger State and Jangebe, Zamfara State.

This chapter explores recurrent challenges of the safety and security of schoolgirls in Northern Nigeria. The study adopted a qualitative method utilising interview method, media reports, and reconstructive philosophical argumentation from the feminist lens to juxtapose ecofeminism and the safety and security of schoolgirls in Northern Nigeria. The chapter is segmented into five sub-headings: Educational policies and their challenges in Nigeria; the second section discusses the conceptualisation of ecofeminism; the next section of the chapter explains ensuring the safety and security of schoolgirls from an ecofeminist perspective; the next section highlights why the safety and security of schoolgirls is imperative, while the last section is the recommendations and concluding section.

Educational policies and their challenges in Nigeria

Educational policies could be defined as the judgements and guiding concepts that affect how education is practised as well as the body of legislation and regulations that control how educational systems are operated. In other words, the Nigerian government has had several policies on education from time to time. The Safe Schools Declaration (SSD) was launched in Norway in May 2015 (UN, 2015b). The SSD was intended to give countries with an incentive to declare support for safeguarding learners, instructors and learning environments from violence. In the declaration, frameworks and suggestions for successfully preventing assaults on educational institutions,

safeguarding educational facilities and pupils, and responding to and lessening the effects of such assaults in impacted locations were addressed. In line with this, this study addresses environmental variables that may affect the safety and security of schoolgirls, as well as its interconnection with ecofeminism, which I term as 'women's safe environment' or, put another way, an environment in which schoolgirls can learn safely.

The Norway Declaration on Girl Child Education convention was held in Abuja, Nigeria in 2016 (UN, 2017). The declaration aims to prioritise the education of girls by working to encourage girls' safe attendance at school in Northern Nigeria and to provide aid to areas that have been impacted by kidnappings. The declaration will take into consideration offering humanitarian aid to refugees and internally displaced individuals in the conflict zones. Furthermore, the Safe Schools initiative aims to assist women and girls who have been subjected to one type of abuse or another, as well as to promote basic education in the conflict-torn North East Nigerian states of Yobe, Borno, Adamawa, and Gombe.

In addition to the Norwegian government's intervention, the federal government of Nigeria was forced to start the Safe Schools Initiative (GIZ, 2014) after it became clear that the nation's schools were frequently the target of attacks by radicals, robbers, and kidnappers. As part of the intervention measures for victims of conflict zones, funding was granted for the Safe Schools programme. Eighteen high-risk states have been chosen to be covered between 2023 and 2026. Over the medium term, the government intends to cover half of the majority of public schools at risk of assault. With UNICEF's assistance, almost 100,000 children are currently gaining access to education in North East Nigeria through Temporary Learning Spaces and schools (UNICEF, n.d.).

According to Mwoma et al. (2018), the government funding would enable more children to complete their basic education in a conducive learning atmosphere and would provide much-needed counselling for girls who have endured unfathomable anguish at the hands of their abductors. In Borno State, a fair number of women and girls were reintegrated back to their families and communities. In addition to the Safe Schools initiative, in 2021 the Federal Ministry of Education came up with some policies that could address the problems of safety, security and violence in Nigerian schools. One of such is the policy on violence against children (VAC) proposed by Nigeria's National Policy on Safety, Security, and Violence-Free Schools (Federal Ministry of Education, 2021). This programme emphasises the need to address all acts of violence and abuse on children under the age of 18 within school grounds or on their journey to and from school. The VAC policy is also concerned with creating a child-friendly school where students may enrol,

learn, retain, and complete their teaching and learning. Consequently, girls should not learn in a toxic environment.

A fundamental objective of this policy is to provide quality education for students of all ages irrespective of gender, which includes adults and children. It strives to ensure that all learners and teachers have the right to an educational experience in an atmosphere that is secure and safe. Izam (2023) contends that a large number of females in Northern Nigeria encounter substantial educational obstacles, such as impoverishment, early marriage, and customs that place a higher value on male education than female education. As stated by UNICEF (2007), an estimated 10 million school-age females are out of school, the majority of whom are from Northern Nigeria. Girls' access to basic education in Nigeria has remained poor, particularly in Northern areas (Akinbi & Akinbi, 2015). Children out of school can be measured in terms of the number of children who could not make the transition from primary to secondary school. Izam (2023) argues that investing in girls' education is crucial for improving the overall well-being of families and communities in the Northern region. When a country prioritises girls' education, it thus creates a just and equitable society where everyone can thrive. Supporting this point, McCartney (2018) posits that educating girls breaks the cycle of poverty and is one of the most effective tools. Educated girls are more likely to secure better-paying jobs, which can help lift their families out of poverty. Additionally, educated women can better support their children's education and health, creating a positive development cycle. Education is a powerful tool for empowering girls and giving them a voice in their communities. They could also be involved in decision-making and assume leadership roles, and can better advocate for their rights and those of others. For Ujam (2019), education reduces the rate of child marriage, which is prevalent in Northern Nigeria and can help stimulate economic development in the region and reduce dependence on aid and foreign investment.

In addition to the terrorist groups' increasingly obvious violence and their targeting of girls' education, attendance at schools in Northern Nigeria is constrained because of issues with school access, family and educational resources, and attitudes towards learning. Poor fundamental education standards in Northern Nigeria result in low demand and appallingly low academic achievement, particularly in the Qur'anic school system. The scenario of the several kidnap cases of schoolgirls in Northern Nigeria reveals the insensitivity of the Nigerian government to the environmental factors and safety measures around schools that contributed greatly to the insecurity of schoolgirls.

Nti, on 14 April 2014, reported the kidnap of schoolgirls from their school premises in Chibok, Borno State. A total of 276 were reportedly kidnapped, while 57 girls managed to escape. Amnesty International (2015) estimated that in 2015, at least two thousand women and girls were abducted following the Chibok incident. The repeated kidnapping and abduction instances in Nigeria sparked international outrage, social media campaigns, and civil society advocacy. Yet, Boko Haram activities of consistent kidnappings and abductions became rampant in the Nigeria-Cameroon-Chad-Niger border regions. Thus, the kidnapping of the Chibok girls raised awareness around the world and sparked the then-viral #BringBackOurGirls rallies. Despite the #BringBackOurGirls campaign (#BringBackOurGirls, 2024), the Nigerian government and security forces have done little to nothing to fully rescue the girls from their captors, putting the parents of these children in unrelenting misery. Apart from the 57 girls who escaped the day their schoolmates were kidnapped, some of the abducted girls have been released, while the country still hopes to release the remaining girls.

After the Chibok incident, there have been several other kidnap and abduction cases of schoolgirls in Nigeria. For example, Hegarty (2018) reported on *BBC* that some 110 schoolgirls were abducted in Dapchi in Yobe state in 2018. In addition, Mosadomi (2021) reported in the *Vanguard* newspaper that 42 persons, including 21 students and three staff, were kidnapped at a government college, Kagara, Niger State. Eyoboka (2021) reported in the *Vanguard* newspaper that 153 Bethel Baptist Church Secondary School students in Chikun, Kaduna State, were kidnapped. These kidnaps are some of the many cases that Nigeria has witnessed in the last ten years. It is worrisome that these kidnap and abduction cases are mostly women and girls.

Consequently, feminist scholars, NGOs and women activists seek the need to address the safety and security of schoolgirls and put a stop to this menace that threatens the future of Nigerian women and girls. Subsequently, this chapter examines the concept of ecofeminism, which is considered instructive and relevant to the issues around violence, environmental safety and security of schoolgirls in Nigeria. Thus, education, one of the sustainable development goals, is confronted with a major obstacle to implementing policies that could foster its progress and advancement.

More often than not, the reality of these policies is far from implementation as Nigerian governments pay less attention to issues around education and give more attention to other sectors of the economy. Their act of tokenism towards the educational sector is worrisome as it continues to cause a major barrier to the safety and security of Nigerian schoolgirls. Thus, feminist scholars and other stakeholders in the educational sector are making

unrelenting efforts to bring to public awareness this great menace to Northern Nigerian girl child education and the way forward. It is envisaged that the federal government will help reduce all incidents of violence, insecurity, and lack of safety in schools if it can put into practise the measures recommended by the national policy on security, safety, and violent-free schools.

Conceptualising ecofeminism

The concept 'ecofeminism' is a current environmental ethic that examines the connections between women and nature. *MacGregor (2006) avers that ecofeminism explains the connection between women, the environment and nature.* It utilises the notion of gender to examine how people interact with the natural world. As *King (1987)* posits, it is a concept that signifies the integration of radical ecological and feminist philosophy from many perspectives. It aims to eradicate inequalities and hierarchies based on gender while also protecting the environment and establishing connections linking women and environmental abuse. This notion contends that the dominant patriarchal system could be accountable for the manipulation of womankind and nature in developing nations.

The issue of gender relations and hegemony in the approach to environmental conservation is fundamental to ecofeminism's thought. *Regan (2020)* argues that ecofeminism spots climate change, equality of gender, and social injustice in general are all inherently connected issues, all linked to masculine domination in society, and specifically draws attention to the reality that environmental challenges disproportionately affect women.

D'Eaubonne (1974) emphasises that the disenfranchisement and oppression of women, individuals of colour, and economically disadvantaged people are inextricably related to the degradation of the nanorod, as both arose as a result of patriarchal power. Many of them agree that all types of oppression are interconnected and that oppressive structures must be addressed in their entirety. They see this socially constructed oppression as a result of patriarchal power dynamics. Consequently, this chapter argues that the threat to the Northern Nigerian schoolgirls' safety and security could be linked to the abuse and oppression of girls, through the series of kidnap cases reported. Bringing in the concept of ecofeminism helps us to understand that women have a close relationship with nature (always using water for house chores, firewood for cooking, plants and leaves for soups and herbs), and it also helps to appreciate the worth, dignity, and necessities of all biotic life. *D'Eaubonne (1974)* avers that ecofeminism is geared towards putting an end to the dual dominance and abuse of women and nature, and how it contributes to the formation of a loving, compassionate, and understanding

attitude towards all living things. Therefore, it can be said to cultivate the grounds for a peaceful and mutual co-existence.

Ruther (1983) argues that ecofeminism will help to completely overhaul all patriarchal dominance and abuse of women and replace it with an ethic of care, a morality based on women's nurturing and caring qualities. This strategy emphasises human kindness and acting in a way that puts others' needs before one's own (especially women and girls). It targets how actions can be taken to improve the environment conducive to habitation for secure schoolgirls' safety and security. In the same vein, Warren (1987) argues that feminists should pay attention to environmental challenges and ecological interdependence. On the basis of these views, women should be more mindful of their environmental difficulties, particularly as they affect their well-being.

Warren (2014) argues that ecofeminism is about strategies, solutions, and precise descriptions of problems. She believes that the fight for international justice and ecological well-being are intimately connected to ecofeminism, which involves complex studies of gender, racism, and colonialism. Ecofeminism has survived the anti-essentialist panic and has developed into a more rigorous, multicultural, and practical perspective. This is possible because the underlying assumptions of ecofeminism resonate deeply with women and community struggles worldwide, including movements against oppressive globalisation.

Ruther (1983:24) asserts that many ecofeminists agree that women's dominance is linked to nature's dominance. "We cannot critique the male-female hierarchy without ultimately attacking and overcoming the hierarchy of humans over nature." As a result, they see gender equality and social injustice as inextricably linked concerns rooted in masculine supremacy in society. Conceptualising ecofeminism in Nigeria, male dominance comes to play in how men play prominent roles in decision-making. From the federal to local government levels, it cannot be disputed that there are more men who make decisions than women, even in the educational sector. In a bid to achieve the SDGs (UN, 2015a) in Nigeria, it is very crucial to begin to consider involving more women in decision-making and implementations. The kidnaps and attacks on schoolgirls in Nigeria are an undercover of male dominance, female exploitation and oppression in Northern Nigeria, which results in making the girls become premature mothers and suicide bombers against their wishes. Therefore, the inductive application of ecofeminism strategies to the educational sector is critical for ensuring the protection and security of schoolgirls in the Northern part of the country.

Ensuring the safety and security of schoolgirls from an ecofeminist perspective

A school is an institution where people come to learn and teach. It is not only about creating a structure, but also about ensuring that it contains appropriate teaching and learning activity. Schools can be viewed as crucial to nation-building since they give children a thorough education and development. This, nevertheless, can only be ensured if learning takes place in a secure and safe atmosphere. Despite the Nigerian government's useful intentions in enacting various rules aimed at ensuring school safety and security, particularly in the North, there are still gaps in implementation. According to the findings of the 2014 National Survey (NPC, 2014), violence against children is still pervasive in Nigeria. One of the factors responsible for this high prevalence is not putting environmental factors of learning into consideration. By environmental factors of learning, it means issues like location of the school, roads leading to the school and the infrastructure.

According to UNICEF (2006), preserving the safety and security of schoolgirls necessitates important and necessary 'in-school' and 'out-of-school' environmental norms where effective teaching and learning may take place. This indicates that all biotic variables in the school should be safe for teaching and learning in order to improve learning, such as by providing and promoting a mentally, physically, socially, and cognitively secure environment. A focus on school safety takes into cognisance three important factors: (a) safe school facilities and learning environment; (b) disaster risk reduction in schools; and (c) protection of children from violence and all forms of abuse in school. Therefore, there is a need to advocate for a stronger trans-disciplinary collaboration between ecofeminists, educationists / education, and the Nigerian government towards creating gender-balanced formal and informal learning conditions suitable for the safety and security of schoolgirls.

UN Resolution 1325: Content, implementation and relevance

Resolution 1325 (S/RES/1325) on women, peace, and security was adopted by the UN Security Council in a unanimous vote on 31 October 2000 (UN, 2000). It was the Security Council's first official and binding resolution demanding warring parties to respect women's rights, encourage women's participation in peace talks and post-conflict reconstruction, and safeguard women and girls from sexual violence in conflict. Armed conflict has a significant and exceptionally devastating impact on women and girls, according to the resolution. It urges the application of a gender perspective to address the special requirements of women and girls during war, rehabilitation and

relocation, recovery, reintegrating into society and reconstruction following a conflict.

The resolution's primary objective is to safeguard against sexual and gender-based violence in crisis zones. It calls on the state to eradicate all sorts of crimes against humanity, particularly sexual assault, and to prosecute offenders. Another aspect of Resolution 1325 is the inclusion of women in peace negotiations in all conflict zones, with a focus on supporting local women's peace initiatives. In addition, the information is intended to protect women and girls in refugee contexts. The resolution urges conflicting parties to contemplate the unique necessities of women and girls when planning and operating refugee camps. It attempts to take gender into account in discharge, demobilisation, and reintegration, particularly the distinct needs of male and female ex-combatants, and to train UN member states in the protection of women's and girls' rights, increasing female political engagement at all levels. Gender equality in the UN is being achieved by expanding the number of women serving as Special Representatives in field operations, observers, and relief personnel.

Implementing the Resolution demands four primary procedures, which are as follows: Preventing all types of gender and sexual violence, as well as sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeeping forces; Safeguarding, which entails improving women and girls' safety, mental and physical wellness, economic security, and general well-being; Engagement entails supporting and promoting women's engagement in the peacekeeping process; Recovery and relief tracking numbers connected to outcomes, such as the number of women in peace talks, the number of military manuals that incorporate measures for women's protection, or the number of cases probed for violence against women, are examples of specific indicators. The UN Security Council Resolution is pertinent to this study since its execution will aid in the improvement of education and instruction. When the environment is safe, learning may occur efficiently. There will be an incentive for females in the Northern states to attend school, which would eventually contribute to their empowerment and advancement in society, state, and nation.

Why is the safety of schoolgirls imperative?

The factors that make a school safe can vary depending on who you ask. In one instance, Hernandez et al. (2010) state that a secure educational institution lacks the threat of aggressive behaviour and is characterised by a setting without a sense of dread for the establishment or its punitive measures. This suggests that everyone who works in or visits a school can do so without fear of being harmed: children, teachers, staff, and guests. A more

pragmatist and management-focused description of school safety is provided by Hull (2010), who asserts that it includes the school's culture as well as the appropriate tools and training to deal with risks and dangers. According to Squelch (2001), a safe school is one where staff, teachers, and students can work, impart knowledge, and study without being concerned about being made fun of, harassed, humiliated, or physically harmed.

USAid EducationLinks' *A Practical Guideline to Making Schools Safer from Natural Disasters for School Principals and School Committees* (2014) defined school safety as an instance in which an educational institution acknowledges and safeguards children's rights by providing a situation and setting that guarantee students' well-being, security, and safety at all times throughout the entire teaching and learning process.

“Safer schools give students and teachers a sense of safety, comfort, and health both in everyday situations and in case of emergencies. By implementing the standard for catastrophe-resilient structures and systems and creating a safer social structure, schools are able to protect the school community including the surrounding environment from disaster risk”
(USAid EducationLinks, 2014:13)

In reference to *Safe and Sound Schools* (2014), which examined safety in the context of school societies, the word 'safety' refers to all of our efforts to maintain the security of the school community and its surroundings. A school community tackles various problems and emergencies under the umbrella term of 'safety' to protect its students' well-being. Physical and mental health, school environment, fire prevention, climate safety, architectural security, hazardous persons, bullying, natural catastrophes, neighbourhood crime, and transit and roadway safety are all examples of safety concerns, according to *Safe and Sound Schools* (2014). Providing a safe environment for pupils from their residences to travel to their schools and return is referred to as 'school safety'. This includes defence against all forms of abuse, aggression, mental issues, fire, transportation, and natural and man-made calamities. In a safe school, teachers, students, and other staff members can participate in and carry out their educational and instructional endeavours without worrying about potential danger. A safe school emphasises internal risks or threats that originate inside the structure.

According to Squelch (2001), children who feel threatened or fearful of their fellow students, teachers, supervisors, or even the school's architectural structure may indicate a symptom of school safety. For instance, a school would be regarded as dangerous if there had been violence there between students, teachers, or members of the community. Squelch (2001) avers that a plan in the school policy meant to handle situations that may be dangerous

for children and staff is the primary indicator of a safe school. Successful learning takes place in a safe and encouraging atmosphere at school. Gender-related issues, such as the focus of this chapter, are a fundamental global issue that demands urgent attention. Consequently, the importance of the safety and security of schoolgirls must be balanced. The Federal Ministry of Education (2016:3) defined school safety as “establishing safe settings for kids from their homelands to their schools and back. This covers protection from violence, natural disasters, human-caused disasters, more frequent, smaller-scale fires, other emergencies, and environmental dangers that could endanger children’s life”.

School safety could be defined as measures taken by staff, parents, students, and other stakeholders to reduce or remove risk factors or threats that could result in mishaps, physical harm, as well as emotional and psychological suffering. Apart from natural disasters, other forms of disaster are man-induced. They can be prevented because they are artificial disasters. These disasters can be completely avoided or reduced if some measures are implemented. The bottom line is: once humans are able to ensure that certain things are preserved, protected and well-organised, then the safety of everyone can be guaranteed, at least to an extent. Furthermore, the safety and security of schoolgirls enhance the progress and development of the global world. As more girls gain access to good education, many are empowered to become professionals in their fields of study. Girls and women who are more educated aspire to be leaders, which increases a nation’s leadership and entrepreneurial skills. They also attain the knowledge to become leaders and participate in decision-making for the progress and development of the nation.

For King and Winthrop (2015), academic excellence could be achieved if girls learn in a safe and secure setting and are found to achieve a high level of academic performance than schoolgirls in an unsafe environment. In addition, learning in a safe environment makes girls relax and ready to learn. Their concentration will be high as there will be no hindrance to schoolwork. It also helps them psychologically to be calmer, more flexible and more anxious to be in school.

The kidnapping of the Chibok girls prompted foreign governments such as China, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States to intervene, giving military advisors as well as information and surveillance help. Despite this assistance, several girls continue to be held captive by Boko Haram. The involvement of foreign nations highlights the intricate logistical arrangements that must be made to ensure the protection of a limited number of girls. As a result, while a state’s primary duty is to safeguard its women and girls and, as a result, solve any internal issues like

corruption and gaps in training and equipment maintenance, as is the case in Nigeria, effective implementation of UNSCR 1325 (UN, 2000) also requires international cooperation. This scenario could have been avoided if certain measures had been implemented, for example, security infrastructure like fencing the school with electric wiring, bulletproof doors and walls around the school buildings. UNICEF (2006) suggests that installing CCTV (closed-circuit television) cameras at the entrance and school offices will greatly help. If the Chibok school had a CCTV camera, the school management would have seen the attackers and taken prompt action to ensure the girls' safety.

There is a need to increase security personnel in Nigerian schools. More police officers and other security personnel should be provided in schools, not just providing security personnel alone, but they should be well equipped for defence in case of an attack on the school. In addition, effective communication and prompt response: schools should be provided with Internet services, an intercom for staff and security for close enough communication. It is also important to note that schools should not be built too far away from town for easy Internet network access. This would also have helped the safety and security of the Chibok girls as the school management would quickly place calls to security personnel and local security agents who would have quickly responded to the distress call. A safe alternative exit route in times of distress should also be provided. If the Chibok girls had an alternative route of escape, many of the girls would have been able to escape from their abductors. Girl-friendly infrastructure is also one of the things that could improve the safety of schoolgirls. This is the provision of facilities that are girl-friendly, such as decent restrooms, classrooms, laboratories, and dormitories in the event of schools with hostel facilities, and good potable water for simple washing.

Additionally, in order to increase the academic success of girls, programmes that concentrate on improving infrastructure and educational inputs should be developed with incentives for girls in mind. An illustration of such a programme is the Burkina Faso Response to Improve Girls' Chances to Succeed (BRIGHT) programme (Reliefweb, 2014), a government initiative that established well-equipped schools in 132 villages in Burkina Faso. The package of interventions encompassed, amongst other things, a school structure, educational resources, housing and support for teachers, training for government officials on sensitivity to gender, monetary incentives for children to go to school, a mechanism for galvanising support from the community for education in general and girls' education specifically, environmental factors such as good access roads to schools. Providing good access roads to the schools, that are easily traceable and not built in the forest or deserted places should also be considered. With good access roads to

school, transportation will be made easy. It could be argued that the Chibok attack could have been avoided if the road to the school was safe and passable for vehicles out of concern for being blocked or pursued by security personnel.

Mwoma et al. (2018) put forward that in every educational setting, it is essential to make sure that safety supplies like first aid kits and firefighting equipment are accessible. Other safety precautions include keeping blankets, water, and buckets of sand on hand in case of a fire outbreak. It is important to ensure safety in schools and freedom from violence; schoolgirls must not be made to go through psychological, emotional or physical abuse such that their rights are protected. Environment disaster risk reduction (DRR) such as schools should not be built in an unsafe environment like places close to canals, rivers, or deserted places. The government must also guide against environmental pollution around the school. The location of the Chibok school could also be one of the reasons why it was very easy for the Boko Haram to launch an attack. With all of these in place, there will be a great result in girls' education which will be a means of liberation of women and girls from male dominance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Gender issues are critical to global significance because they can influence a society's progress and development. Gender and feminist scholars advocate for women's and girls' liberation from male oppression and subjugation. Consequently, maintaining women's and girls' human rights is fundamental to attaining sustainable development in Nigeria. Recently, Nigeria has been confronted with a persistent challenge of insecurity. Undoubtedly, this challenge remains a thorn in the flesh of Nigeria and the world at large. Despite these security challenges, it is discovered that women and girls are more vulnerable to insecurity. The vulnerability of women and girls to insecurity is overwhelming and calls for the intervention of global powers. Nigeria is mostly patriarchal, so less attention is paid to the safety and security of women and girls. It is therefore recommended that:

1. The environment for the schoolgirls must not be toxic.
2. There is a need for funding and partnership by the government, stakeholders and non- governmental agencies.
3. There must be a political will to implement educational policies and the elimination of all forms of violence against children, especially girls.
4. VAC must be domesticated with more concentration on the Northern parts of the country.
5. Our advocacies and agitations must go beyond paperwork to actual implementation.

One of the fundamental human rights is that every child should have a right to quality education. Not just any education, but a good one. This good education must occur not just anywhere but in a conducive environment that is suitable for teaching and learning.

The agitations to resist the continued dominance of women by men is central to women globally. This chapter focuses on the gender dimension of the problem of insecurity in Nigeria. It emphasises the safety and security of schoolgirls and the government's and society's neglect of environmental and ecological conditions surrounding schools, exploring the narratives of the Chibok schoolgirls and related cases of kidnap as a case study on the safety and security of schoolgirls. The chapter also addresses the problem of the lack of fit between pedagogical needs and the environmental factors well-suited for the safe learning of a girl child. There is a need for adequate security in educational institutions. Efforts should be made to see that every girl child is well protected from any form of emotional or physical attack. Therefore, the federal government should conduct twice-yearly investigations into potential threats to the security of students and personnel in open schools, with a particular emphasis on those institutions serving female students and are located in remote areas. The risk study should also look at infrastructure vulnerabilities in schools, analyse and prepare evacuation routes, and assess how well risk and vulnerability mitigation strategies are working.

This chapter recommends that educational policies at all levels should be reviewed such that they meet up with the international standards. Restrictions on school entrances with tight security should be implemented, and school safety focal points with trained teachers are recommended. Ecofeminist ideas and concepts are particularly pertinent now to evaluate the sexist and profit-driven capitalist patriarchy that continues to damage our ecosystem by exploiting its inhabitants and its natural resources.

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