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PROMOTING VALUES EDUCATION AS A STRATEGY TO COMBAT INSECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE NIGERIA SOCIETY

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Introduction:

Nigeria as a nation in recent times, has been passing through turbulence that is rocking its very fabric of existence. Amid the barrage of her political upheavals, fragile economy, social instability, and cultural erosion; is the emergence and surging tsunami of insecurity that has engulfed and almost paralyzed life and living in Nigeria. Insecurity has soared highest in the nation's rank of social problems manifesting in diverse forms and shapes such as banditry, kidnapping, insurgency, terrorism, occultism, cybercrimes, and armed robbery just to mention a few. Bisong (2020) believes that it is the fundamental right of individuals to live securely, acquire property and move freely within their environment without molestation as they engage in their profession. Insecurity has almost grounded to a halt our socio-economic activities, which has coerced a massive exodus of families particularly the young Nigerians who have fled the country by every means, in search of greener pastures and conducive environment; that will enhance their psychological wellbeing. The traumatic impact of insecurity in Nigeria seems to have overwhelmed every measure put in place by governmental institutions and the law to counteract it and protect her citizens. According to Bhandari (2022), insecurity is a state of uncertainty, fear and a feeling of inadequacy that produces inferiority, anxiety and instability that could make an individual unable to pursue and achieve goals and aspirations. Insecurity can also be caused by unpleasant and traumatic experiences an individual has encountered. Constantin (2020) observed a concerning shift in societal values. Traditionally cherished virtues like obedience, decency, respect, honesty, hospitality, cooperation, and strong traditional family discipline have waned in importance. This change is attributed to the rise of single parenthood and the breakdown of nuclear family structure, resulting in numerous challenges for children. Many youngsters find themselves in dysfunctional homes, which, in turn,

push some of them onto the streets, where they face the uncertainties of unsupervised life. In this environment, children often become exposed to undesirable influences and behaviors, including substance abuse, clubbing, drinking, gambling (such as Bet-Naija), and a general disregard for authority.

Mantutu (2023) confirms that education, a crucial agent of socialization, is expected to instill values in children, molding their attitudes and life skills. However, the educational system has also faced a decline in its value system. Teachers, who are supposed to serve as role models, have, at times, exhibited unethical behaviors, such as abuse, extortion, and corruption. All these factors have contributed to incidents of violence and tumultuous atmosphere in many of our public primary and secondary schools. It therefore becomes imperative and urgent to seek alternative solutions to counter insecurity in Nigeria. One of such ways is to emphasize value education, which involves a comprehensive process of transformation of an individual's manifest characteristic traits and personalities. It inculcates in an individual, the ability to discriminate between right and wrong. It modifies behaviours, attitudes and habits. To achieve this, a series of acceptable mores and values of the society, should be intentionally weaved into key subject areas of the curriculum and taught to students. To properly inculcate these values, appropriate connections should be made to enhance learning activities in the various domains of value such as holistic life skills education, substance abuse prevention education, media literacy and information education, comprehensive sex education, promoting sustainable development through education, education for universal human rights within legal parameters and so on (Ravi, 2015).

It is against this background that this paper will explore the following areas: insecurity challenges in Nigeria, value education as a tool for social change, integrating value education into the curriculum, promoting ethical and moral values, using technology for value education, measuring the impact of value education on insecurity, challenges in implementing value education and International best practices, lessons for Nigeria and the way forward.

Insecurity Challenges in Nigeria:

The spiral web of insecurity challenges in Nigeria is unprecedented. There is need to understand the nature of insecurity, and some of its causes. The past eight years have witnessed serious security uprisings such as Boko Haram, terrorists attack, kidnappings, banditry, Fulani herds men, Niger Delta militancy groups, unknown government, cultism among many others. These are all capable of causing total chaotic systemic collapse if there is no major intervention to restore security. It is also important at this point, to also examine how we got into this insecurity quagmire as a nation. The Global Peace Index for 2023 has placed Nigeria at the 144th position out of 163 countries, with a score of 2.713. In the context of African

nations, Nigeria ranks 37th out of 44. This unsettling ranking is based on three key parameters of peacefulness: external conflicts, deaths resulting from internal conflicts, and political instability conflicts. These findings hold significant implications for Nigeria's economic growth and overall development.

The porous state of Nigeria's borders has been a primary contributor to rising security challenges, as reported by The Guardian Newspaper in 2022. Out of Nigeria's 261 borders, a mere 124 are adequately manned, leaving a troubling 137 unattended despite substantial financial investments in security. A staggering 2.74 trillion naira in 2023 alone (as reported by The Punch Newspaper) yet, the situation has not seen substantial improvement. Instead, insecurity issues continue to escalate, with northern Nigeria bearing the brunt of terrorism. The brutalization and killing of farmers have led to reduced food production and disrupted the distribution of agricultural products, causing a surge in poverty and hunger.
Insecurity is no longer confined to one region; it has spread across the nation. In the southern part of Nigeria, there is an alarming rate of pipeline vandalization, mysterious government-related killings, and "sit-at-home" protests, which have taken a severe toll on the economy in the Eastern part of the country. The consequence is the growth of poverty and unemployment, coupled with a concerning increase in the number of out-of-school children, estimated to be around 20 million (Ume, 2023). This education crisis is another great concern for the security of Nigeria's future.

Among the numerous factors that contribute to insecurity in Nigeria, modernization process, globalization, and the erosion of traditional societal values have introduced a new and distinctive pattern of insecurity. Modernization has brought positive changes, including improved living standards and aspirations for a better life. Yet, in Nigeria, it has also ushered in a decline in moral values and the sanctity of human life as individuals pursue material success at any cost. The prevailing ambition is to "make it" without ethical considerations. This has fostered a culture of self-aggrandizement, power, and influence, often manifested in greed, oppression, extortion, a "get rich quick" mentality, and corruption, among other vices. This erosion of traditional values has permeated every sector of society, especially among Generation Z, who find themselves at the intersection of Western and Nigerian cultural value systems, leading to an ethical dilemma.

Values Education as a Tool for Social Change:
The role of values education as a tool for social change should not be underestimated. It inculcates in the learners, the ability to make sound decisions and choices, based on moral principles. Nigeria is a diverse country in many ways. It is multi-ethnic and religious, with a complex socio-political landscape, that has often

posed challenges of corruption and inequality in resource allocation to her as a nation. Values education will, therefore, facilitate ethical citizenship by imparting values, such as respect, honesty, responsibility, patriotism, among many others.
Values education will help promote social cohesion among the unique cultural diversities in the country; by instilling values of tolerance, empathy and inclusivity which will foster peaceful co-existence and bridge the ethnic and religious divide. Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa (Worldometer, 2023) and has a high percentage of youth population. According to Akinyemi (2023), about 70% of the Nigeria populations are under 30 years and living below poverty line. Lack of education and unemployment have exposed them to lack of basic human needs which invariably could drive them into most of the cases of insecurity in the country. Values education, therefore, will instill in the youths, values that will curb disorderly behaviours and reduce crime rates among them. The youth population can become the agents of positive social change, especially when they are empowered with values that will make them take good decisions and make wise choices that will not frustrate them or make them susceptible to disorderly behaviours. Moreso, it will produce a new crop of citizens with a mindset to defend human rights, create respect and value for the vulnerable, support the minority groups in the country and generally promote a more harmonious society (Gupta, 2023).

Examples exist of countries who have integrated value education in their school system, as a way of catalyzing social change. Japan for instance, has introduced the teaching of values for life in her elementary and middle schools to instill in citizens the respect for life and other people's cultures. In Mozambique, India, Egypt, Australia, Turkey, and Russia respectively, some forms of values education have been introduced to their citizens to enhance healthy interpersonal relationships, discipline, patriotism, respect for elders and one another's opinion, culture, and social order (Bosio, 2021; Mefodeva, M., Khairytdinov, R. & Fakhrutdinova, A. 2017). This strategic move by these countries is aimed at building character of young people, making them to be purpose driven and ultimately full functional members of the larger society.

Integrating Values Education into the School Curriculum:
The need for deliberate integration of values education into the school curriculum has become urgent to inculcate in the learners, values that will make them morally sound, patriotic and effective citizens in the society both nationally and globally (NPE, 2014). To achieve this goal, the government through the education department of the Independent and Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) has designed the national values curriculum in which values education is integrated and taught in three subjects at the basic and secondary education. They are Christian and Islamic studies, civic education, and security education. Though this is very bold and

commendable, but there are still some very strategic steps or line of action that could be taken to properly inculcate values education into school subjects. The following areas are suggested: Learning experiences of children especially in the basic and senior secondary education, should be designed to inculcate practical field experiences and excursion trips that will reinforce values such as respect, compassion, tolerance. Periodically, role models and guest speakers with outstanding track records of hard work and discipline, should be invited to share their life experiences as examples to learners of how values can be practiced and lead to success stories.

Subjects like security and civic education, which are values centric subjects should not be designed only to cover topics like ethics, compassion, honesty, tolerance, social responsibility among others, but infuse in these subjects, case studies, discussions, and hypothetical cases to intentionally emphasize desired values to be inculcated. Another way to integrate values education into the school subjects, is by selecting or choosing age-appropriate texts, stories and literature and intentionally weave in, clear moral lessons in them. This can also be extended to subjects like social studies, science and even mathematics. For instance, word problems in math can be created with real life ethical dilemmas embedded in them involving sharing resources fairly and equitably; and learners will be asked to discuss the ethical considerations in solving that. Or assigning group projects to science students, emphasizing the value for cooperation, communication, and respect for diverse perspectives of group members, and how such collaborative work enhances effective out-put. Such an interdisciplinary approach will help learners to appreciate the importance of values in different aspects of life. In the training of teachers also, efforts should be made for them to master the art of delivering value-based lessons. Finally, understanding the extent to which learners have imbibed values taught, can also be assessed by asking the learners to write essays, reflections, and expression of opinions of how texts and literature has imparted their perception of values. By these, learners can be engaged in meaningful discussion of ethics, values, and character development, which helps to deepen the understanding of those concepts.

Promoting Ethical and Moral Values:

Nigeria is a huge country with diverse histories, cultures, languages, value systems that are influenced by its ethnic groups. To reduce insecurity, and foster social cohesion, it is important that key ethical and moral values that cut across the ethnic divides are identified and promoted when teaching value education. The National Ethics and Integrity Policy (2020) have outlined seven core values that the different climes and cultures in Nigeria uphold. They are values of integrity, personal responsibility, patriotism, professionalism, national unity, voice and participation, and human dignity. These core values have been translated into various

implementable values such as honesty and integrity, which is fundamental in upholding social, interpersonal, and professional relationships in Nigeria. Respect is another basic value in the society, where the younger members are expected to respect the elders who represent wisdom, experience and authority. It also promotes care and compassion for one another, and reduces oppression, intimidation and discrimination in the society. Values that have to do with family and religion such as love, tolerance and hospitality, encourage unity and peaceful co-existence. They also serve as a strong deterrent to criminal activities by miscreants in the community, who can be easily identified, stigmatized and given up to law enforcement agencies. Ethical and moral values also serve as serious deterrents to insecurity, corruption and other unwholesome behaviours that could lead to threat of lives. When people dwell in peace, they can concentrate and focus on their professions and make meaningful contributions to their community (Walia, 2022). When these values are taught and practiced, they become naturally internalized by citizens and act as a moral guide towards all their relationships and business transactions. It also makes members accountable for their actions, knowing that any misdemeanor has punitive repercussions as indicated by the independent and corrupt practices commission (ICPC), it also constraints members to make positive choices for meaningful living. Ethical and moral value practice in the educational sector, will help create the right social climate of learning for students. It will reduce unwholesome activities of some students that make the learning environment insecure like bullying, fighting, violence, cultism, substance abuse, vandalization and loss of school property (Bisong, 2020). By promoting ethical and moral values, it will provide a framework for individuals to live their lives and make principled decisions. Constantly reinforcing and instilling these values in the society, will gradually lead to an emergence of a culture that opposes insecurity of any sort and fosters a safer and harmonious society.

Using Technology for Value Education:

Technology has transformed the global world into a digital community, it has radically revolutionized the manner in which things are done, transiting the society gradually to e-learning, e-classrooms, e-banking, e-commerce and so on. It has created multiple channels of doing business in practically every sphere of human endeavour, breaking barriers and reaching the target populations. This has become obvious, through the social media revolution that has facilitated communication and information dissemination through various networks. Popular among them are WhatsApp, Facebook, twitter, Instagram, zoom, video conferencing, emails, blogs and YouTube. Social media have made positive contributions in aiding productivity and advancement in the global economy. In Nigeria, the use of social media is highly subscribed, and people use it for doing their businesses, social networking, job recruitment and empowerment.

Technology also has some negative outcomes that have equally impacted the society. The surge in its use, especially the social media has raised very serious concerns of insecurity from cybercrimes, cult recruitment, kidnapping to terrorism (Thurairatnam, 2023). Especially, the young ones whose lives have become so intertwined with social media, that they virtually seem to live their lives in it. A study carried out by Akinola & Opawale (2020) shows that 23% of students in Ayo Babalola University Osun State, use social media for socialization rather than academic purposes.

Beyond this, social media has evolved a value culture that is at variance with the Nigerian value culture. For instance, it has exposed the youths to foreign values and ideologies, in the pursuit for materialism and quest for better life. It has disconnected many of them from their social environment and aggravated disagreements between them and their social values, ethics, norms and language (Zaman, 2020). Most youths have accepted the culture of "influencers", and adopted them as mentors whose unhealthy lifestyles on social media have attracted large followership as an acceptable way of behaving and carrying on social activities in life. This has reset their thinking, that every information on social media is real and it has created an open door to cybercrimes, different forms of aggression, violence and promotion of fake news.

Having established the fact that technology is still evolving and has very far-reaching influence on society, it becomes crucial to note that technology also has the potential to instill value education and transform behaviour. Since young people are heavy viewers, introducing a wide array of innovative technological tools and resources is crucial. These tools should not only captivate and remain pertinent to the educational values but also connect with the experiences of young individuals. Furthermore, they should impart ethical and moral principles that are applicable in today's digital era. As an example, the creation of educational online games is a viable approach. Given that young individuals have a strong inclination for online games, these games could incorporate ethical dilemmas, prompting players to make moral choices that mirror the values of the society, while also illustrates the ramifications of their decisions. Students can also be encouraged by teachers to start or join blogs and chat bots, where they can reflect on moral and ethical questions. They can document and share their personal thoughts with their peers and teachers at school. Parents should also monitor the home, recognizing it as the primary source of socialization and impartation of values. Children's exposure to cartoons and other T.V. shows on computers and Facebook, including contents on social media platforms, should be regulated to ensure that what they watch will instill the right kind of values and principles in them.

Measuring the Impact of Value Education on Insecurity

Measuring the impact of value education on insecurity in Nigeria is a complex undertaking that demands a comprehensive strategy. The challenge arises from the fact that value skills acquisition, require some long-term outcome. Nevertheless, for a thorough evaluation, combining quantitative data with suitable statistical analysis can be instrumental in unveiling the actual impact. Employing qualitative methods also, such as surveys and in-depth interviews, case studies and longitudinal studies to gather feedback from students, teachers, parents, and the community can play a vital role in achieving an overarching goal of establishing a harmonious environment. This environment would nurture individuals with fundamental principles and values, such as tolerance, love, compassion, integrity and robust decision-making skills. A typical case study was carried out by Cornerstone in Singh (2011) to demonstrate the impact of incorporating value education into the school curriculum in New Zealand institutions. A longitudinal study was carried out and questionnaires were sent to the institutions in 2004, 2007 and 2009 respectively. A score sheet was designed to observe and record changes in the variables under study, over an extended period of years indicated. Some of the key attributes measured were relationship between staff and students, discipline, playground behaviour, vandalism and school as a caring community. Result revealed that 85% of the responses indicated that enhancements within each school were due to value education. This result also led to one of the schools adopting value education in the school curriculum.

Value education can also be measured through survey studies. Questionnaires are designed to collect information on students' attitudes, believes, ethics, security, and behaviour related values. These questionnaires are administered before and after the implementation of value education programme, to track the changes over time. Observation approach is another strategic way of measuring the impact of value education on security. Students' behaviours can be observed during plays and other group activities or in communities, to track reduced involvement in bullying, fighting, harassing, violence and conflicts. Instances are documented appropriately. Students' academic performance indicators such as discipline, attendance, achievement, can be observed and documented. Data collated can also be mapped regionally or by state to compare states or regions with high or low incidences of insecurity. A mechanism should be set up to receive feedback from parents and guardians on the behaviour changes they observe in their children like conflict in peer interactions, aggressive tendencies, dispositions to anger and hostility, as a result of their exposure to values education. Finally, continuous feedback periodically from major stake holders and students will assist in not only accessing the level of insecurity, but making necessary improvements in values education.

Challenges in Implementing Value Education

Implementing value education in Nigeria is a laudable endeavour, that is faced with a lot of challenges, but require very intentional strategy and considerations on how to tackle them. In a study carried out by Missan-Rupee (2021) on teachers' perception of the implementation of value education in Nigerian schools, 300 upper basic education teachers were sampled in Delta State. The results revealed a catalog of resistances, ranging from lack of proper understanding by teachers of the National values curriculum, poor content delivery, lack of interest by teachers to implement it, to poor monitoring and supervision. The issues unveiled by this study is fundamental to the success of the goals of the values-based education, which is to instill in the young people, values of contentment, justice, and national consciousness that will help create a safe environment and people with positive attitudes. This needs to be proactively discussed by all major stake holders and make them buy in to the rationale for values-based education.

In another study by Saka (2021), to determine the constraints in teaching and learning of values in Nigerian schools. He discovered that there were differences in societal values, because of the multi-diverse nature of the Nigerian society. That makes it difficult to prioritize what values each cultural group upholds. It was also revealed that there is a gap between values taught in schools to children and what they experience in the society. For instance, bribery and corruption which are taught as vices, are condoned by society. He suggested value clarification approach as a strategy to teach value education. This will enhance a deeper reflection of values taught, an understanding of the need for such values, and a willingness for possible change of attitude.

In another similar study, Nwafor (2021) concluded that effective implementation of value-based education in Nigeria is constrained by some factors highlighted such as lack of parental oversight and cognitive based education, different perspectives about values and negative social media influences. These have enabled corruption to strive, and subsequently insecurity.

During informal phone conversations with some teachers of value education in public primary schools across the three educational zones in Cross River State. They were asked to share the challenges they face, while instructing on this subject. A summary of their experiences confirms that primary school teachers in Cross River State encounter several challenges in the effective implementation of value education. These challenges revolve around the lack of cooperation between homes and schools, where the home, traditionally the primary source of a child's socialization, often falls short in instilling values. Teachers in many cases, hesitate to closely monitor children's behavior due to concerns about parental reactions. Instances of parents confronting teachers when their children are disciplined or corrected are not uncommon. Furthermore, a significant challenge arises from

irregular school attendance by teachers, primarily driven by insufficient salaries that force many teachers to seek supplementary income sources. These issues collectively present formidable barriers to the successful execution of value education in the state.

International Best Practices and Lessons for Nigeria:

Many global nations have used value education to successfully address some of their societal vices and get some others under control. An identification of some of these global practices, and possible adaptations of some of their strategies to the Nigerian situation is proposed. Singapore is one of the countries that has compulsory values-based education, articulated, and implemented in the late 1950s, for the purpose of ensuring that values, norms, dispositions and skills are developed among students. In 2011, the country articulated a student centre value driven education that marked a turning point in character development of students, alongside their social and emotional competencies (Lee, Chia, Pereira & Tay 2022). This has created a social cultural environment that is rancor free and geared towards professional training and all-round development.

The Philippines introduced values-based education into all levels of their school system in response to a far cry by citizens to the government to intervene in the breakdown of morals and value systems in the society. This was followed up by creating a framework of values-based education that cuts across all climes of cultural, ethnic, and religious divides. Programme activities were designed to inculcate learning experiences that will develop in the students the spirit of patriotism, tolerance, appreciation, and mutual acceptance (Quisumbing, 1994).
In Germany, character education is considered an important aspect of their educational system. Their educational programmes are designed to produce citizens who are responsible and focused on their personal and professional growth. Their programmes are developed with values such as integrity, fairness, respect which are meant to be inculcated at a young age (Sender, 2023).
The Ontario school board in Canada launched its Character Development Initiative which makes character education compulsory in its public schools. It is targeted at providing experiences that make students acquire interpersonal skills, behaviours and values that will enhance active participation in a pluralistic society. They also provide hands on activities for young children, through play and games, which help them acquire experiences in conflict resolution, skills, relationships with peers and communication (Winton, 2023, Canadian Character Education Activities, 2023).

The Way Forward:

1. Continue and enhance the integration of value education into the school curriculum, making sure it covers a wide range of subjects, beyond security education, civic education, and religious studies.
2. Provide continuous training and support for teachers to effectively deliver value-based lessons, including the use of modern pedagogical methods that engage students.
3. Ensure that the content and materials used in value education are age-appropriate, ensuring that students can relate to and understand the moral lessons being taught.
4. Incorporate practical experiences and field trips that reinforce values like respect, compassion, and tolerance. These real-world experiences can have a lasting impact.
5. Invite role models and guest speakers with outstanding moral character and life experiences to share their stories and serve as examples to pupils and students.
6. Implement an interdisciplinary approach to value education, connecting ethical dilemmas and moral considerations to various subjects like mathematics, science, and social studies.
7. Develop a robust monitoring and assessment system to measure the impact of value education on student behavior and attitudes. Regular feedback from students, teachers, parents, and the community is crucial.
8. Promote parental oversight and involvement in the value education process, reinforcing the same values at home that are being taught in schools.
9. Emphasize values that promote national unity, tolerance, and inclusivity, bridging ethnic and religious divides that contribute to insecurity.
10. Consider the value clarification approach, where students engage in deep reflection on the values being taught, understand their importance, and willingly adopt them.
11. Continuously promote ethical and moral values in schools and communities to create a cultural environment that opposes insecurity and fosters a safer and harmonious society.
12. Leverage technology to create engaging and interactive content for value education, while also promoting responsible use of technology to avoid negative influences.
13. Learn from successful value education models in other countries, adapting strategies that have worked in places like Singapore, the Philippines, Germany, and Canada to Nigeria's unique cultural context.
14. Encourage collaboration among educational institutions, policymakers, teachers, parents, and the wider community to ensure the successful implementation of value education.

Conclusion:

Insecurity in Nigeria is a pressing issue that threatens the nation's stability and progress. To address this multifaceted problem, the implementation of value-based education is a crucial step in reshaping the country's moral fabric and creating a safer and more harmonious society. Value education is a powerful tool for social change, one that can instill in learners a strong ethical foundation, personal responsibility, and a commitment to national unity. The core values of integrity, respect, love, compassion, inclusiveness and ethical conduct should be at the forefront of this educational approach.

By investing in the character development of its youth and instilling strong values, Nigeria can make meaningful strides in combating insecurity and building a brighter future for its citizens.

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