

**FOUNDATIONAL LITERACY IN SCHOOLS AS A SOLUTION TO INSECURITY IN
ANAMBRA STATE NIGERIA, A STUDY OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN AWKA
NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ANAMBRA STATE**

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Abstract

The study examined foundational literacy in schools as a solution to insecurity in Anambra State Nigeria, using public secondary schools in Awka North Local Government Area of Anambra State as a case study. The aim of the study was to assess foundational literacy programmes in secondary schools in Awka North Local Government Area as a means of educating people against insecurity, and evaluate the roles government can play in addressing insecurity in Awka North Local Government Area of Anambra State through foundational literacy in secondary schools. The population of study was made up of 2,502 SS2 students. 250 respondents were sampled using stratified random sampling technique. Self-structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Data collected were analysed using mean rating. The findings of the study showed that foundational literacy programmes in secondary schools in Awka North is a means to educating people against insecurity; also, there are roles government can play in addressing insecurity in Awka North Local Government Area through foundational literacy in secondary schools. The study concluded that foundational literacy in schools serves as a critical mechanism for addressing the pervasive issue of insecurity in Awka North Local Government Area, Anambra State. Based on the findings, the study recommended that Secondary schools in Awka North Local Government Area of Anambra State should develop comprehensive curricula that include critical thinking, civic education, and conflict resolution skills. This approach will empower students to understand and address roots of insecurity in their communities; the government should prioritize investment in foundational literacy initiatives as a strategic approach to combat insecurity in Awka North Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria. These include providing adequate funding, resources, and training for educators.

Introduction

Background to the Study

Insecurity has become a pressing issue in many parts of the world, affecting both individuals and communities. It manifests in various forms such as violence, political instability, and a general sense of fear. In many African countries, including Nigeria, insecurity has become particularly alarming due to rising crime rates, insurgencies, and terrorist activities. As defined by Ojah (2020), insecurity refers to a state of being vulnerable or exposed to danger or threats, both real and perceived. It can stem from a variety of sources, including political, economic, and social factors, leading to an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear. Adedoyin (2018) argue that insecurity is deeply rooted in the failure of governance and the breakdown of social institutions, which are meant to provide stability. This condition leaves populations in a continuous state of apprehension, as they feel unsafe in their environments due to the absence of adequate security measures. Consequently, insecurity weakens the social fabric and undermines trust within communities. This can be said to be the issue with south east Nigeria where insecurity is the order of the day.

Insecurity in Anambra State Nigeria has emerged as a major challenge, causing significant disruptions to the social, economic, and political life of the region. The rise of violence and instability can be traced to several

interrelated factors, including the activities of separatist movements like the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), the growing influence of local militias, and the spread of criminal enterprises such as kidnapping, armed robbery, and banditry. Eze (2020) maintained that the resurgence of these movements and criminal activities has created a sense of fear and uncertainty among the populace, limiting the ability of residents to go about their daily lives. The failure to address long-standing grievances related to political marginalization and economic neglect has fueled widespread resentment, exacerbating the already volatile situation.

The increasing militarization of the Anambra State as a government response to the rising insecurity has, in some cases, worsened the problem. While the government's intention has been to restore law and order, the presence of military forces has sometimes resulted in human rights violations, arbitrary arrests, and extrajudicial killings (Nwankwo, 2021). These actions have alienated many locals, fostering an atmosphere of mistrust and animosity between the people and the state. Furthermore, as Udeh (2022) noted, that over-reliance on military intervention, without a corresponding effort to address the underlying socio-economic issues, has perpetuated a cycle of violence, making it difficult to achieve sustainable peace. One of the most critical consequences of the insecurity in Anambra State Nigeria is the negative impact on the economy. As rural and urban areas are increasingly affected by violence, business activities have slowed, and investors have become reluctant to commit to projects in the region. Okoro (2023) indicated that the rate of unemployment in the Anambra State has surged as industries and businesses face frequent disruptions due to insecurity. This has created a vicious cycle, where economic hardship fuels discontent, leading to more violence and instability, further exacerbating the region's economic problems.

The failure of security agencies especially in Awka North Local Government Area of Anambra State to effectively manage the crisis has further deepened the insecurity in the region. Ojo (2021) asserted that the police and other security forces are often underfunded, poorly equipped, and lacking the necessary intelligence to confront the organized criminal elements in the Awka North Local Government Area. Moreover, corruption within the security agencies has eroded public trust, as many citizens believe that law enforcement officers are complicit in some of the criminal activities they are meant to prevent. This situation has led to a lack of cooperation between the public and security agencies, further undermining efforts to restore peace in the region. Another factor contributing to the insecurity is the deep-seated grievances stemming from the political marginalization of the Awka North Local Government Area in Nigeria's broader political landscape. Many residents of the region feel that their interests are not adequately represented in national decision-making processes, which has led to a growing sense of alienation (Ubah, 2022). This perception has fueled the rise of separatist groups that exploit the frustrations of marginalized groups, especially the youth, to advance their agendas. However, most of the perpetrators of this problem have been said to be majority of those who are school dropouts, while some of them are those who did not get foundational literacy in schools.

Foundational literacy refers to the basic ability to read, write, and understand simple text, which serves as the groundwork for acquiring more advanced skills across various subjects in education (Uwa, 2020). However, regarding the present study, the researcher defined foundational literacy as the initial stage of literacy development, focusing on building the core skills necessary for students to engage with written and spoken language. Foundational literacy in schools is crucial for the development of essential reading, writing, and comprehension skills that form the basis of a child's education. It is during the early years of schooling that students begin to develop the ability to interpret and understand written text, which is essential for academic success across all subjects. Pretorius and Spaul (2016), literacy serves as the foundation upon which students build their ability to learn and absorb knowledge. Without strong foundational literacy, students are at risk of struggling with future academic tasks, leading to lower educational attainment. Moreover, foundational literacy goes beyond just reading and writing. It is about developing critical thinking skills and the capacity to engage with information effectively. When students can read proficiently, they are better equipped to understand complex ideas and participate in deeper learning activities.

The importance of foundational literacy is also reflected in its long-term societal impact. Literate individuals are more likely to participate in civic activities, make informed decisions, and contribute positively to the economy. Ugama (2017) explained that foundational literacy in schools is, therefore, not only a tool for individual success but also a powerful instrument for social transformation and development. However, the lack of foundational literacy in schools in Awka North Local Government Area of Anambra State Nigeria is a pressing problem that has far-reaching consequences for the region's educational system. In many schools in Awka North Local Government Area Nigeria, however, students are not acquiring these skills early enough, leading to a significant gap in their educational development. Okeke (2020) highlights that poor

teacher training, lack of adequate teaching materials, and overcrowded classrooms are some of the key factors contributing to this issue. As a result, many students move through the educational system without mastering these essential skills, which affects their ability to succeed in other subjects.

The absence of foundational literacy not only affects individual student performance but also has broader implications for the overall quality of education in the region. Uche (2021), students who lack basic literacy skills struggle with comprehension in higher-level subjects such as science, mathematics, and social studies. This creates a situation where students are unable to engage meaningfully with the curriculum, leading to low academic achievement and high dropout rates. Additionally, the problem exacerbates educational inequality, as students from underprivileged or rural areas are more likely to attend schools that lack the resources necessary to provide quality literacy instruction, further widening the achievement gap. These students however, i

Furthermore, the lack of foundational literacy has a significant impact on students' long-term prospects. Ozoemena (2019) argues that literacy is not only an educational issue but also an economic one, as students who fail to develop strong literacy skills are less likely to gain employment or pursue higher education. In Anambra State Nigeria, this problem is particularly acute, as the economy increasingly demands workers who are literate and capable of adapting to various professional fields. The cycle of poverty and crime is closely linked to the lack of foundational literacy, as individuals who are unable to escape poverty through education are more likely to become trapped in criminal lifestyles. This has become a very disturbing issue in the region and the present study sought to investigate foundational literacy in schools as a solution to insecurity in Anambra State Nigeria, using public secondary schools in Awka North Local Government Area as a case study.

Statement of the Problem

Insecurity in Awka North Local Government Area Nigeria has become a major concern, affecting both economic and social stability in the region. Over the years, the escalating violence, attacks, and general instability have significantly disrupted daily life, leading to widespread fear and uncertainty among residents. The situation has deteriorated to a point where many people are hesitant to travel or engage in routine activities, hampering commerce and productivity. This rise in insecurity has prompted calls for urgent intervention to restore peace and stability, yet the problem persists, leaving the future uncertain for many in the region.

The economic impact of insecurity in the Anambra State, Awka North Local Government Area as a case study is immense. Small businesses, markets, and local industries have suffered greatly as customers and investors shy away from regions known for violence and unrest. Many companies have been forced to scale down or shut operations entirely, resulting in significant job losses. This economic stagnation has contributed to a cycle of poverty and deprivation that further fuels the insecurity in the region. Additionally, with transport routes becoming increasingly dangerous, the movement of goods has been disrupted, contributing to the rising cost of living in affected areas.

Social cohesion has also been severely undermined by the insecurity in the Awka North Local Government Area. Fear and distrust have grown within communities, as people are often unsure of their safety even among familiar faces. The constant state of alert has taken a toll on mental health, with many experiencing heightened anxiety and trauma. Schools and other institutions have been disrupted by the violence, affecting educational outcomes and leaving a generation of young people at risk of falling behind academically. This breakdown in social structures has exacerbated feelings of isolation and abandonment, especially among vulnerable populations.

In addition to the social and economic consequences, the security apparatus itself in the Awka North Local Government Area is overwhelmed. Law enforcement agencies and the military have struggled to maintain order, with frequent reports of clashes between security forces and criminal groups. The increasing sophistication and boldness of these groups highlight the challenges the government faces in restoring order. Communities, feeling underprotected, have sometimes resorted to self-help measures that only exacerbate the situation, leading to further tension and violence. Reports of kidnappings, violent attacks, and destruction of property have been constant headlines, drawing attention to the severity of the situation. This negative portrayal has further tarnished the image of the state and Awka North Local Government Area, affecting tourism and international investments. Despite efforts by the government to address these issues, the solutions offered have often been inadequate or temporary, failing to address the deeper-rooted problems that continue to fuel the insecurity. However, one of the major causes of this problem has been said to be lack of basic ability to read, write, and understand, which serves as the groundwork for acquiring more advanced skills. This basic literacy helps people to be able to understand different information, especially

written ones, which will help them to make informed decisions about themselves and the society they live in. The present study is, therefore, set to examine foundational literacy in schools as a solution to insecurity in Anambra State Nigeria, using public secondary schools in Awka North Local Government Area as a case study.

Objectives of Study

The main objective of the study is to examine foundational literacy in schools as a solution to insecurity in Anambra State Nigeria, using public secondary schools in Awka North Local Government Area, Anambra State as a case study. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Assess foundational literacy programmes in secondary schools in Awka North as means to educating people against insecurity.
2. Evaluate the roles government can play in addressing insecurity in Anambra State through foundational literacy in secondary schools in Awka North Local Government Area.

Research Questions

1. How do foundational literacy programmes in public secondary schools in Awka North Local Government Area contribute to educating people against insecurity?
2. What roles can government play in addressing insecurity in the Awka North Local Government Area through foundational literacy initiative in public secondary schools?

Scope of the Study

The study has both area and content scope. The study covered public secondary schools in Awka North Local Government Area, Anambra State. The content scope is limited to foundational literacy in schools as a solution to insecurity in Anambra State Nigeria. It tried to assess foundational literacy programmes in secondary schools in Awka North as means to educating people/students against insecurity; and evaluate the role of government in addressing insecurity in South East through foundational literacy in secondary schools.

Literature Review

Foundational Literacy

Foundational literacy refers to the essential skills in reading, writing, and basic mathematics that individuals need to function effectively in everyday life. It serves as the cornerstone of further learning and development, as individuals who possess foundational literacy can better engage with more complex subjects and skills. Foundational literacy is critical in early education, as it lays the groundwork for lifelong learning and cognitive development. Pretorius and Spaul (2016) asserted that children who acquire these basic literacy skills are better equipped to succeed in school and beyond, highlighting its pivotal role in shaping educational outcomes. The concept of foundational literacy extends beyond just the ability to read and write; it encompasses a deeper understanding of how language works, enabling learners to interpret and use information effectively. This includes recognizing letters, words, and numbers, as well as understanding their meanings and relationships. Studies by Piper et al. (2018) emphasize that early mastery of foundational literacy is crucial for cognitive development, as it enhances learners' ability to comprehend more advanced texts and ideas. In turn, this fosters a more meaningful engagement with education and promotes academic achievement across subjects.

Moreover, foundational literacy is a key driver of social and economic progress. When individuals have the capacity to read, write, and solve basic mathematical problems, they are more likely to participate actively in their communities and contribute to the economy. Global initiatives focused on improving literacy rates in developing regions underline the importance of foundational literacy as a tool for empowerment and societal development. As noted by Wagner (2018), improving foundational literacy skills not only benefits individuals but also plays a significant role in reducing poverty and improving overall quality of life.

Insecurity

Insecurity refers to a state of vulnerability or uncertainty, often characterized by a lack of safety, stability, or protection. It manifests in various forms, including physical, emotional, or psychological dimensions. In the context of society, insecurity often relates to threats to safety caused by crime, violence, political instability, or economic hardship. Adebayo (2021) explains that insecurity can create fear and anxiety, destabilizing communities and leading to broader societal problems. In many regions, insecurity is tied to

poor governance, weak law enforcement, and socio-economic inequalities, which contribute to an environment where people feel unsafe and vulnerable.

Insecurity is not just limited to physical threats; it also encompasses emotional and psychological dimensions. When individuals lack confidence in themselves or their circumstances, they may experience a sense of insecurity that affects their mental well-being. Olaniyi (2019) emphasizes that emotional insecurity, such as feelings of inadequacy or fear of failure, can lead to anxiety and depression. Similarly, in organizations or relationships, insecurity can lead to conflicts and distrust, affecting interpersonal dynamics and reducing productivity or cohesion. This emotional aspect highlights how insecurity permeates both the personal and collective experience.

At a broader societal level, insecurity has significant economic and developmental implications. Areas plagued by high levels of insecurity often face economic stagnation, as businesses and investments shy away from unsafe environments. Nwanne and Adesoji (2020) argue that insecurity hampers economic growth, exacerbating poverty and reducing opportunities for development. When insecurity is pervasive, it undermines social order, weakens institutions, and impedes efforts to build sustainable development, making it a critical issue that requires comprehensive solutions involving governance, law enforcement, and socio-economic reforms.

Theoretical Framework

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory was developed by Gary Becker in 1964. The theory posits that individuals' economic value is largely determined by their education, skills, and experience, which contribute to productivity and earning potential. This theory, primarily developed by economists like Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz, suggests that investments in education, training, and health enhance an individual's capabilities, leading to higher output and better job opportunities. From an organizational perspective, human capital is seen as a key asset, as a more skilled and knowledgeable workforce can drive innovation, efficiency, and competitive advantage.

The theory emphasizes the quantifiable nature of skills and knowledge, arguing that these can be measured in terms of their contribution to economic growth. As workers acquire more human capital through formal education or on-the-job training, their productivity increases, which in turn leads to higher wages. However, critics argue that the theory can oversimplify the complex relationship between education and labour markets, as factors such as social capital, discrimination, and unequal access to resources also play critical roles in determining an individual's economic success.

Human Capital Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how foundational literacy in schools can address insecurity in Anambra Nigeria, specifically within public secondary schools in Awka North Local Government Area. The theory suggests that investments in education, particularly literacy, can improve individuals' skills and knowledge, making them more productive and less vulnerable to negative influences, such as criminal activities. In the context of Anambra State Nigeria, where insecurity has become a pressing concern, foundational literacy equips students with the critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills necessary to pursue legitimate economic opportunities, reducing the likelihood of engaging in violence or criminal behavior.

By enhancing human capital through literacy education, schools in Awka North Local Government Area of Anambra State can contribute to long-term social stability. Literate students or individuals are more likely to find gainful employment, which lessens the economic desperation that often drives insecurity. Furthermore, foundational literacy fosters social awareness and civic responsibility, helping students understand the impact of insecurity on their communities and encouraging them to become agents of change. Therefore, addressing insecurity through foundational literacy aligns with the Human Capital Theory's emphasis on education as a critical tool for both personal and societal development.

METHOD

Research Design

Survey research design was used in carrying out this study. This is chosen because the study is set to study people, their attitudes, belief system, opinions and other behavioral manifestations.

Area of study

Awka North Local Government Area is located in Anambra State, Nigeria. It consists of several towns and communities, with Achalla as its headquarters. The area is primarily rural, with agriculture serving as the dominant occupation. Awka North is known for its rich cultural heritage and close proximity to Awka, the state capital. The Lingua Franca of the areas is Igbo and English language.

Population of the study

In connection with this study, the population of study is made up of 2502 SS2 students in the 9 public secondary schools in the area (Post Primary Schools Service Commission, Awka North, 2024).

Sample size/Sampling techniques

Stratified random sampling was used to select 250 students from the zone which represents 10% of the entire population.

Instrument for Data Collection

Questionnaire was used for data collection in this study. The questionnaire contains 10 items grouped in 2 clusters which were used to seek the response of the respondents on the subject matter.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using mean scores. Four point rating scores were assigned numerical values as shown below:

Strongly Agree (SA)	4
Agree (A)	3
Disagree (D)	2
Strongly Disagree (SD)	1

Decision Rule:

Mean rating of any item ranged from 2.5 and above will be regarded to be agreed, while those below 2.5 will be regarded as disagreed.

Results

Table 1: Respondents Mean Ratings on foundational literacy programmes in secondary schools in Awka North Local Government Area as means to educating students against insecurity

S/N	Item Statements	$\sum fx$	\bar{X}	REMARK
1.	Foundational literacy programmes equip students with critical thinking skills, enabling them to analyze information about insecurity	860	3.4	Agree
2.	foundational literacy can help students understand the socio-economic and political factors contributing to insecurity	796	3.1	Agree
3.	Incorporating conflict resolution education into foundational literacy programmes	910	3.5	Agree
4.	literacy and communication skills enables students to effectively express their concerns about insecurity	760	2.9	Agree
5.	Educated students are better equipped to challenge narratives that perpetuate insecurity	792	2.8	Agree
	Grand Mean		3.2	Agree

Table one above showed that items 1 to 5 have mean scores of 3.4, 3.1, 3.5, 2.9, and 2.8 respectively, which are all above 2.5. This revealed that the respondents agreed that foundational literacy programmes in secondary schools in Awka North Local Government Area is a means to educating students against insecurity.

Table 2: Respondents Mean Ratings on the roles government can play in addressing insecurity in Anambra State through foundational literacy in secondary schools in Awka North Local Government Area

S/N	Item Statements	$\sum fx$	\bar{X}	REMARK
6.	Investing in the professional development of teachers	561	2.2	Not agree

7.	Ensuring effective delivery of foundational literacy programmes is very essential	714	2.7	Agree
8.	Initiate campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of foundational literacy in combating insecurity	846	2.9	Agree
9.	Establishing mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of foundational literacy programmes	671	2.7	Agree
10.	facilitate collaboration between educational institutions and security agencies	691	2.8	Agree
Grand Mean			2.7	Agree

In the table 2 above, items 6 to 10 have mean scores of 2.2, 2.7, 2.9, 2.7, and 2.8 respectively which showed that the respondents accepted that there are roles government can play in addressing insecurity in Anambra State through foundational literacy in secondary schools in Awka North Local Government Area.

Discussion of Findings

Data in table I revealed that the respondents agreed that foundational literacy programmes in secondary schools in Awka North Local Government Areas is a means to educating people against insecurity. This can be seen in their agreement that Foundational literacy programmes equip students with critical thinking skills, enabling them to analyze information about insecurity; foundational literacy can help students understand the socio-economic and political factors contributing to insecurity; Incorporating conflict resolution education into foundational literacy programs equips students with the skills to manage disagreements peacefully; Educated students are better equipped to challenge narratives that perpetuate insecurity. This is inline with the assertion of Akuoma (2023), who noted that when students learn to analyze news articles, research reports, and community resources, they can become informed advocates for peace and security.

Also the data in table 2 showed that respondents agreed that, there are roles government can play in addressing insecurity in Anambra State through foundational literacy in secondary schools in Awka North Local Government Area. This is evident in the fact that the respondents agreed that Ensuring effective delivery of foundational literacy programmes is very essential; Investing in the professional development of teachers; initiate campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of foundational literacy in combating insecurity; Establishing mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of foundational literacy programs; and facilitate collaboration between educational institutions and security agencies. This is supported by Ogbonna(2021) view who noted that by prioritizing literacy education, the government can enhance students' understanding of their rights, responsibilities, and the socio-economic factors that contribute to insecurity, ultimately fostering a more peaceful society.

Conclusion

Foundational literacy in schools serves as a critical mechanism for addressing the pervasive issue of insecurity in Anambra State Nigeria, particularly in Awka North Local Government Area, Anambra State. By equipping students with essential literacy skills, educational institutions not only foster individual cognitive development but also cultivate a sense of community and civic responsibility among the youth. Enhanced literacy empowers students to engage meaningfully with their environment, enabling them to discern and challenge negative influences that may lead to violence and insecurity. Furthermore, when students are proficient in reading and writing, they become more capable of accessing information that promotes peacebuilding initiatives and conflict resolution strategies, thereby contributing to a more secure society.

Moreover, the implementation of robust literacy programmes in public secondary schools can act as a preventive strategy against the factors contributing to insecurity in the region. It encourages critical thinking, creativity, and positive social interaction, all of which are fundamental in dissuading young students/individuals from engaging in criminal activities or falling prey to extremist ideologies. By prioritizing foundational literacy, the educational system can play a transformative role in fostering resilience among students, empowering them to become advocates for peace and agents of change within their communities. Ultimately, investing in literacy education is not merely an academic endeavor; it is a vital step toward achieving sustainable security and stability in Anambra State Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. Secondary schools in the Anambra State should develop comprehensive curricula that include critical thinking, civic education, and conflict resolution skills. This approach will empower students to understand and address the roots of insecurity in their communities
2. The government should prioritize investment in foundational literacy initiatives as a strategic approach to combat insecurity in the Anambra State extending specifically to Awka North Local Government Area. This includes providing adequate funding, resources, and training for educators.

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