

Enhancing Teacher Preparedness for Promoting National Security Awareness: A Comprehensive Training Framework in the Post-COVID-19 Era

Mahmud Malami Shallah¹

Nabila Muhammad Kabir²

Samaila Muhammad³

^{1 & 3}Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling
School of Education and General Studies
Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto State

²Department of Educational Foundations
School of Education and General Studies
Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto State

Abstract

The study explored the critical nexus between education and national security in Nigeria, emphasizing teacher preparedness as a strategic avenue for promoting national security awareness in the post-COVID-19 era. It underscored the growing threats of religious extremism, misinformation, and societal unrest exacerbated by educational inequalities and post-pandemic vulnerabilities. Using a mixed-method design combining empirical literature review and stakeholder consultations, the study identified gaps in Nigeria's teacher training systems, particularly in emergency response, civic education, and ideological resilience. A comprehensive training framework is proposed, integrating continuous professional development, curriculum-based security modules, and multi-agency collaboration. Findings aimed to guide policymakers, teacher training institutions, and education ministries in creating proactive, security-conscious learning environments.

Keywords: Teacher preparedness, national security, civic education, religious extremism, COVID-19

Introduction

The linkage between education and national security has gained renewed urgency in the wake of COVID-19, as global vulnerabilities deepen across political, economic, and social structures (UNESCO, 2021). In Nigeria, insecurity—driven by terrorism, religious extremism, kidnapping, and community violence—has increasingly targeted educational institutions, undermining learning and threatening national cohesion (Bamgbose, 2023; Abdullahi & Nwachukwu, 2022). Teachers are not merely conveyors of knowledge but pivotal agents in shaping civic values, resilience, and vigilance among learners.

In particular, post-pandemic realities have revealed weaknesses in Nigeria's educational crisis preparedness and security response mechanisms. As Adebayo and Salawu (2021) argue, integrating national security awareness into education not only deters ideological radicalization but also strengthens community intelligence and youth resilience. Unfortunately, teacher training in Nigeria largely omits these dimensions,

leaving schools vulnerable. This paper calls for a new approach—one that repositions teacher preparedness as a cornerstone of national security in the evolving post-COVID-19 educational landscape.

Statement of the Problem

Teacher preparedness for promoting national security in Nigeria is hampered by systemic gaps. These include limited exposure to security literacy, insufficient professional development, and weak collaboration with security agencies (Yusuf et al., 2022). Schools are often unequipped to identify early signs of radicalization or respond to security threats effectively (Adesina, 2023). Despite government security interventions, education stakeholders remain poorly engaged in security policy frameworks (Bello & Igbokwe, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed infrastructural inadequacies and digital illiteracy among teachers, impeding their ability to counter misinformation and extremist propaganda online (UNESCO, 2021). Additionally, curriculum frameworks at both basic and tertiary levels largely ignore national security content (Ogundele et al., 2022). These challenges necessitate a robust training system to prepare educators for their expanded civic and security roles.

Purpose of the Study

The study aims to propose a comprehensive training framework that enhances Nigerian teachers' capacity to promote national security awareness. The objectives include:

- i. Identifying knowledge and skill gaps among teachers regarding security preparedness;
- ii. Integrating civic, digital, and counter-extremism education into teacher training curricula;
- iii. Establishing sustainable collaboration between educational institutions and security agencies;
- iv. Enhancing infrastructure and support systems for safe teaching and learning environments.

Literature Review

Education and National Security

Education plays a dual role as both a driver of development and a safeguard against instability. In fragile states like Nigeria, the school system is a primary front in preventing youth radicalization (Adesina, 2023). Post-9/11 global research increasingly positions schools as spaces where extremism can either flourish or be mitigated depending on teachers' knowledge and pedagogical approach (Davies, 2021).

Scholars like Omeje and Mbachu (2020) and Awortu et al. (2021) emphasize that well-prepared teachers can foster inclusive identities, de-escalate ideological polarization, and instill democratic values. In contrast, teacher unpreparedness contributes to indifference or complicity in ideological grooming, particularly in regions prone to Boko Haram and ISWAP recruitment (Bamgbose, 2023).

Post-COVID Educational Vulnerabilities

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed global gaps in education emergency preparedness. According to UNESCO (2021), over 1.6 billion learners were affected by school closures, making teachers essential actors in adapting to online learning and promoting psychosocial stability. Nigerian teachers, however, faced infrastructural and training constraints that reduced their effectiveness (Ogundele et al., 2022).

Moreover, the digital environment became fertile ground for conspiracy theories, hate speech, and radical ideologies, further emphasizing the need for teachers to develop digital resilience, media literacy, and counter-narrative strategies (UNDP, 2022).

Teacher Training and Professional Development

Studies indicate that continuous professional development (CPD) significantly improves teacher confidence in crisis management, conflict resolution, and student safeguarding (Nwangwu et al., 2022). Effective frameworks prioritize experiential learning, scenario-based simulations, and context-specific modules (Brown & Smith, 2020).

Nigeria’s National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) has made efforts to update teacher training curricula, but national security education remains absent or marginal (Ogundele et al., 2022). Comparative models from Kenya and Indonesia show the impact of teacher-focused civic and peace education programs in reducing youth radicalization (UNESCO, 2021).

Methodology

The study adopted a convergent mixed-method design. This form of research design integrates qualitative and quantitative data to triangulate findings and increase the validity of the results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2021).

Empirical Literature Review

A systematic review was conducted using databases such as JSTOR, ERIC, Scopus, and Google Scholar, focusing on peer-reviewed publications between 2021 and 2024. The review identified thematic categories such as:

- Teacher preparedness for crisis response
- Security education frameworks
- Post-COVID digital literacy among educators
- Curriculum gaps in civic and national security education

Table 1: Summary of Reviewed Literature (2021–2024)

Thematic Focus	No. of Articles	Geographic Focus	Key Authors
Teacher Security Preparedness	18	Nigeria, Kenya	Adesina (2023), Bamgbose (2023)
Security in Curriculum	14	Nigeria, Ghana	Ogundele et al. (2022)
CPD and Crisis Training	10	Nigeria, Indonesia	Nwangwu et al. (2022)
Post-COVID Digital Resilience	12	Global South	UNESCO (2021), UNDP (2022)

A total of 54 relevant articles were analyzed, and trends were coded using MAXQDA software to inform framework development.

2. Stakeholder Consultations

Data were gathered through **semi-structured interviews and focus groups** conducted across three security-challenged Nigerian states:

- **States Covered:** Sokoto, Borno, and Plateau
- **Participants:**
 - 30 Teachers (10 per state)
 - 10 Security Experts (police, civil defence, vigilante reps)
 - 8 Policymakers (Ministry of Education, UBEC, NCCE)
 - 6 Community Leaders (Imams, traditional rulers)

Table 2: Stakeholder Demographics (n=54)

Category	Frequency	% Male	% Female	Mean Age (Years)
Teachers	30	53%	47%	39.6
Security Experts	10	90%	10%	45.8
Policymakers	8	62.5%	37.5%	46.2
Community Leaders	6	100%	0%	54.3

Responses were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and thematically coded using Braun & Clarke's (2006) framework. Key codes included training gaps, inter-agency barriers, digital illiteracy, and curriculum inadequacy.

3. Framework Development

Using a grounded theory approach, emergent themes from the literature review and stakeholder interviews were integrated to create a five-pillar training framework. Iterative feedback loops were used with a small group of 12 stakeholders to validate feasibility and contextual relevance.

4. Ethical Considerations

- Ethical approval: Federal College of Education Gidan Madi's Research Ethics Committee (Ref: EDU/RB/221/23).
- Informed consent was obtained from all participants.
- Participants were de-identified during transcription.
- Interview recordings and transcripts were stored on encrypted drives with limited access.

Results

Thematic and descriptive statistical analysis revealed significant patterns regarding teacher preparedness, systemic coordination, and educational policy gaps.

Theme 1: Gaps in Teacher Training

Quantitative Result:

Out of 30 teachers:

- 83.3% had *never* received formal training in security or emergency preparedness.
- 76.7% could not identify signs of radicalization in students.
- 66.7% lacked digital literacy for counter-misinformation education.

Table 3: Teacher Security Competency (n = 30)

Competency Area	Trained (%)	Untrained (%)
Emergency Preparedness	16.7	83.3
Identifying Radicalization Signs	23.3	76.7
Digital Literacy & Safety	33.3	66.7

Theme 2: Lack of Inter-Agency Collaboration

Security experts and teachers both reported minimal structured engagement. Only 2 out of 30 teachers (6.7%) reported attending any meeting or simulation drill involving law enforcement in the past 2 years.

Narrative Insight:

"We are often informed *after* something happens. There's no communication channel between schools and local security outfits." — Teacher, Sokoto

Theme 3: Curriculum Deficiencies

From interviews with teachers and policymakers:

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- 87% of teachers described the teacher education curriculum as “theoretically rich but practically outdated.”
- Policymakers acknowledged that **national security topics** are addressed only in civic education but not in-depth.

Table 4: Teacher Perceptions of Curriculum Content

Curriculum Topic	Adequately Covered (%)	Poorly Covered (%)
Civic Education	60	40
National Security Awareness	25	75
Digital Media Literacy	30	70
Counter-Radicalization	10	90

Theme 4: Support for Blended Learning

A significant number of participants, especially younger teachers and urban-based staff, favored hybrid learning formats:

1. 73.3% of teachers expressed preference for blended learning (digital + in-person workshops)
2. 60% preferred mobile-accessible platforms (e.g., WhatsApp, Google Classroom)
3. Teachers requested short-duration modular courses (1–2 hours per module)

Statistical Highlights

2. **Chi-square test** revealed a statistically significant relationship between **teacher age** and **digital literacy confidence** ($\chi^2(2, N=30) = 9.87, p < .01$).
3. **ANOVA** showed significant differences in training exposure among teachers from Sokoto, Borno, and Plateau ($F(2, 27) = 4.63, p < .05$), with Plateau having the highest exposure.

Proposed Training Framework

The framework comprises five components:

1. Security Education Module: Topics on terrorism, cyber safety, and communal conflict.
2. Civic Engagement and Critical Thinking: Promotes national identity, empathy, and decision-making.
3. Digital Literacy and Counter-Narratives: Training in verifying information and resisting online radicalization.
4. Collaborative Security Drills: Regular simulation exercises with local security agencies.
5. CPD Incentives and Certification: Reward systems for sustained engagement and excellence in civic education.

Discussions

Findings reaffirm the literature stressing that national security cannot be achieved solely through military means but requires cultural, civic, and educational transformation (Davies, 2021). Teachers, when adequately trained, are well-placed to detect and counter early signs of extremist indoctrination and violence. However, systemic gaps in Nigeria’s teacher training institutions leave a dangerous vacuum.

The proposed framework draws on global best practices and adapts them to local challenges, offering a low-cost yet impactful solution. By integrating security awareness into education, Nigeria can foster long-term peace and democratic resilience from the grassroots.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In a fragile security context, education is not just about literacy but also about civic defense. Strengthening teacher preparedness for national security awareness equips educators to foster resilient, well-informed students who are less susceptible to radicalization and more likely to contribute to peace. This paper offers a comprehensive framework for stakeholders to institutionalize this approach, especially in the wake of

COVID-19 disruptions. policymakers, teacher training institutions, and education ministries in creating proactive, security-conscious learning environments.

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