# INSTITUTIONAL SAFETY POLICY: A TOOL FOR GOAL ACHIEVEMENT IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

BY

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#### **Abstract**

The objective of university education in Nigeria is to provide course of instruction and facilities for the pursuit of learning in all its branches, and to make those facilities available on proper terms to such persons as are equipped to benefit from them. The goal achievement of university is to meet the learning needs and aspirations of individuals through the development of their intellectual abilities and aptitudes throughout their lives as well as achieving its activities relating to the social and economic needs of the people of Nigeria. Institution safety is needed for achieving these objectives and goals. This paper considered institutional safety policy as a tool for goal achievement in Nigerian universities. A safety policy sets out the general approach to safety in an institution as well explains how the employer will manage safety in the institution. The need to verify and support safety policy in Nigerian universities cannot be overemphasized, and the safety goals of Nigerian universities should be clear for it to be able to serve as a tool for goal achievement. The paper is suggesting the use of effective Safety Management System (SMS) to the management of Nigerian universities.

**Keywords:** Institutional safety, Policy, Goals achievement and Nigerian Universities

#### Introduction

Institution safety like institution or school culture, climate, and well-being of students which are good for teaching and learning is needed for effective teaching and learning in any education institutions. School safety is necessary if learning and a healthy development is to flourish (Devine and Cohen, 2007). Safety could be rules and norms, physical security, or social-emotional security. Safety climate according to Umar and Wamuziri (2017) referred to the share perceptions of workers on different aspects of organizational procedures and protocols related to safety. Study carried out by Jung and Park (2014) revealed that Safety climates measured by five factors; management values, safety practice, safety training, safety communication, and supervisor leadership, have significant positive relations with safe behaviours and negative relations with unsafe behaviours. Specifically, safety climates have significantly stronger correlations with unintentional behaviours (automatic safe behaviour and mistake) than intentional behaviours (observance and violation).

According to McCaffery (2019), the functions of universities are to pursuit of research and scholarship, high-level specialized education and training, fulfilling the workforce needs of the 'expert society', taking the lead role in intellectual activities, providing services to the region and immediate community, acting as a screening mechanism for entry into professions, and operating as an avenue for social mobility. Jacob and Musa (2020), in their study of Higher Education in Nigerian identified insecurity as one of the major challenges facing higher education in Nigeria, recommended that the government should provide adequate security to educational institutions in Nigeria.

Insecurity is a situation in which there is no peace and there is threat to lives and properties. These threats may include armed robbery, kidnapping, bokoharam insurgency, rape, suicide bombing, ethnic and religious

crises. Aliyu (2012) observed that insecurity is as a result of structural entrenched crisis of development that creates environment for the emergence of poverty, unemployment and inequality in the country. Njoku (2015) identified the following critical incidents that can lead to protest by students: bomb blasts, cult killings, fire explosion with injuries or significant damage, infection diseases, missing students, quest for wealth, carefree travels by teachers, rechanneling school fees, assault to students, mental health crisis, extortion by teachers, drug/alcohol, sexual assault, death of a student (on or off campus), significant injury on a student, mass exodus of teachers, less preference for teacher education, and fewer female teachers in primary.

Jacob and Musa (2020) confirmed that the insurgent in the Northern part of Nigeria have attacked many higher institutions disrupting their academic programme, killing students and destroying infrastructural facilities meant for teaching and learning. Insecurity in Nigeria and in the Northeast in particular has done more damages to the educational infrastructural facilities. Many school facilities from basic to higher education have been destroyed by the insurgent, and that insecurity have contributed to poor deployment of ICT facilities and administration in the various educational institutions in the northern part of Nigeria. Obi (2015) stressed that insecurity and terrorism has been a major challenge to the Nigerian government in recent times. The activities of the Islamic sect had led to loss of lives and properties in the country especially in the Northern part of Nigeria. Some of these activities include bombing, suicide bomb attacks, sporadic shooting of unarmed and innocent citizens, burning of police stations, churches, kidnapping of school girls and women, etc. Kidnapping, rape, armed robbery and political crises, murder, destruction of oil facilities by Niger Delta militants alongside the attacks carried out by Fulani Herdsmen on some communities in the North and South have been another major insecurity challenge facing the country (Obi, 2015). Issues related to insecurity or threat to safety need to be handled well by the government and respective institutions for the attainment and achievement of educational institution goals to be a reality, hence, the need for institutional safety policy in the Universities as a tool for goal achievement.

#### **Concept of Safety Policy**

An organization's safety policy is a recognized, written statement of its commitment to protect the health and safety of the employees, as well as the surrounding community. The safety policy also details the measures the company (organization) takes and will take to protect the life, limb, and health of their employees, and often surpassing the requirements set out by the laws or by the standard practices of the industry (Safeopedia, 2019). It is an endorsed commitment by management to its employees regarding their health and safety. The Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act requires employers to develop and implement a safety policy. To succeed, a safety policy requires both a commitment and endorsement from the employer and buy-in from the employees (Safeopedia, 2019). It has been stated in Safeopedia (2019) that there are generally three sections in a safety policy, which include:

- 1. Statement of the policy The employer's commitment to managing health and safety and the goal of the policy
- 2. Responsibility Stating who is responsible for implementing, enacting, and tracking each element of the policy
- 3. Arrangements or procedures Outlines the details of procedures including the reduction of hazard policy

It may also include details about the following: Employee training; use of administrative controls, hazard isolation, locking, warnings, signs and symbols marking hazards, etc.; use of personal protective equipment (PPE); removing hazardous materials or replacing them with less harmful alternatives; and improved lighting and working environment; prevention of slip, trip, and fall incidents.

## **Purpose of Safety Policy**

The purpose of Safety Policy is to provide guidance for employees or members of an institution on how to stay safe, and can also help to improve morale and reduce absenteeism. Furthermore, a well-designed health and safety policy can also help to protect institution either business or academic institutions from potential legal action (Hseblog.com, 2022). It is basically the process to protect an employee from work related illness and injury and to make the workplace (building etc.) secure from intruders.

Along with the physical security of the members of an organization, it is essential to ensure that important data, networks, software, equipment and organization's assets are also protected. As mentioned earlier, an institution must have a security program in place. A person will feel secure knowing that the building s/he stays in is secured. When it comes to data security, it is important to have a protected network such that it is not easy to hack into. Moreover, the network should not be shared with any outsider and should be strictly for office purposes (Hseblog.com, 2022). In order to avoid more dropouts or absentees, it is important to implement safety and security management on campus and workplace.

## **Approaches to Safety Policy**

A safety approach describes the philosophies, activities, and technologies used by an organization or industry to identify risks at the workplace. A safety approach also reduces and hopefully eliminates injuries and accidents, while complying with health and safety legal requirements (Kisi, undated). The ultimate objective of applying a suitable and effective safety approach is to ensure a safe and healthy workplace for employees. Occupational health and safety approaches change and improve over time, and it is up to the various industries and organizations to determine which safety approach works for them (EHS Insight Resources, 2020). Some examples of safety approaches that are implemented in organizations and industries include the following (Safeopedia, 2018):

- Treatment-based safety approach: This approach is partially based on the safety pyramid. The goal of
  this approach is to eliminate the root causes of injuries and accidents by eliminating the unsafe acts
  themselves.
- Hurt-based safety approach: This approach examines how serious an incident was and also how serious the incident could have been.

However, the best approaches to safety in the workplace have two key features in common, namely: the proactive and the positive (EHS Insight Resources, 2020).

Proactive: A good approach to health and safety in the workplace is proactive. One should think about safety before an incident arises, not as a means of reacting to a workplace accident or incident but as a means of stopping an incident from happening in the first place. Proactive safety believes that safety issues can and should be prevented.

Positive: Positive approach to safety emphasizes safety as a core value. In other words, safety is something that underlies everything you do, not just because it prevents negative outcomes but because it creates positive health outcomes for the whole workplace. A truly safe workplace understands that health and safety in the workplace is a positive experience, emphasizing the positive elements of safety and taking a positive approach. The positive elements of safety include positive outcomes, such as improved worker morale, greater employee engagement, and improved productivity.

#### National Policy on Safety in Nigeria

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in Section 17 subsection 3, specifically made mention that the State shall direct its policy towards ensuring that the health, safety and welfare of all persons in employment are safeguarded and not endangered or abused. Major legislations that have been enacted in Nigeria to provide for the safety and health of workforce include: The Factories Act, CAP F1, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (LFN), 2004; Employees Compensation Act, 2010; Nigerian Minerals and Mining Act, 2007; Nigerian Nuclear Safety and Radiation Act, 1995; National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools (NPSSVFS); Nigeria Country Profile on Occupational Safety and Health. Other identified related Laws that seek to give guidance to the implementation of occupational safety and health in the country are: Nigeria Basic Ionising Radiation Regulations, 2003; Nigerian Radiation Safety in Nuclear Regulations, 2006; Minerals Oils (Safety) Regulations, 1962; Petroleum (Drilling and Petroleum) Regulations, 1967; National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (Establishment) Act, 2007; Lagos State Safety Commission Law, 2011.

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Relevant to this study are the National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools (NPSSVFS) and Nigeria Country Profile on Occupational Safety and Health. These are briefly discussed as follow:

The Honourable Minister of Education, Mallam Adamu Adamu, in his forward note on National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools in Nigeria has reported that in May 2015, the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD) was opened for endorsement by countries at an international conference held in Oslo, Norway. The Safe Schools Declaration was meant to provide countries with the impetus to express support for the protection of learners, teachers and learning environments from attack during times of armed conflict. The declaration commits to ensuring that all forms of educational pursuit continue during armed conflict and that countries implement concrete measures to deter the use of academic institutions by the military. Specifically, the declaration outlines recommendations to better prevent attacks on education, protect schools from military use and respond to and mitigate the impact of attacks when they do occur in conflict-affected areas (National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools in Nigeria, 2021).

This led to the development and eventual merging of two draft policies – the National Policy on Safety and Security in Schools (NPSSS) and the National Policy on Violence-Free Schools (NPVFS) – into the National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools (NPSSVFS). This is to ensure the safety and security of schools and to create violence-free environments. This policy is intended to provide policy guidance; set a standard for implementing comprehensive school safety plans; and provide prevention and response mechanisms at national, state, local government and school levels. The policy, among other things, provides clear directions on early warning, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and disaster risk management (DRM). In this regard, this policy sets out rules and regulations for guiding the prevention and mitigation of hazards which may occur in formal education settings: basic, post-basic and tertiary institutions in Nigeria, whether public or private. This will help in better identifying and responding to safety challenges, insecurity and violence in school settings. The policy document has the following sections (National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools in Nigeria, 2021):

Section 1: About the Policy

Section 2: Institutional Commitments at the Three Levels of Government

Section 3: Capacity Development for Stakeholders

Section 4: Safety and Security of Schools During Armed Conflict

Section 5: Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders in Ensuring Safe, Secure and Violence-Free Schools

Section 6: Policy Implementation: Policy Implementation, Implementation Planning (National Level, State Level, Local Government Area (LGA) Levels, School Level), Tools to Support User Implementation, Ways to Ensure Safety and Welfare of Learners,

Section 7: Inter-Sectoral Collaboration and Partnerships

Section 8: Funding and Resource Mobilisation

Section 9: Quality Assurance, Research, Monitoring and Evaluation

The National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools proposes a zero-tolerance approach to any type of threat to the school environment, including any form of disaster; gang membership and activity; substance abuse or bullying; violence (including gender-based violence); and other hazards in and around schools, including attacks on schools due to conflicts and war. In the event that these threats actually occur, there must be appropriate support for the school users and community (National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools in Nigeria, 2021).

Also, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO) have taken the step to develop a baseline National Occupational Safety and Health Profile to stimulate effective management of safety and health at work in Nigeria known as Nigeria Country Profile on Occupational Safety and Health. Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) does not only seek to secure the safety and health of persons at work but consequentially stimulates productivity in the business of the enterprise. A National Occupational Safety and Health Profile brings about the identification of the

relevant elements of the national OSH system, their specific roles, capacities and achievements for effective synergy towards a sustainable national OSH prevention programme (Nigeria Country Profile on Occupational Safety and Health, 2016).

This Profile provides the framework for the strengthening of the National Occupational Safety and Health System by identifying the institutional framework, programmes and activities to facilitate systematic assessment and review of the progress and impact of Occupational Safety and Health efforts in the nation. It constitutes an inventory of all the tools and resources available for implementing and managing Occupational Safety and Health in Nigeria, to assist in data and information acquisition for record and planning purposes, setting national priorities for action and promotion of participatory OSH, as desired in the National Policy (Nigeria Country Profile on Occupational Safety and Health, 2016).

The policy document has the following sections: Legislative Framework; Technical standards, Codes of Practice and Guidelines on OSH; National Policy and Standard –Setting Mechanisms; Stakeholder Coordination and Collaboration Mechanisms; OSH System Organization: Means and Tools; Occupational Accidents and Diseases; Policies and Programmes of Employers" and Workers Organizations; Regular or Ongoing Activities Related to OSH; and Situation Analysis of the National OSH System.

## **Dimension of Safety in University**

All students as well as the staff want to feel safe on campus. Common crimes on university campuses include burglary, vehicle theft, forcible sex offenses, fondling and external threats from the surrounding environment. Campus safety measures may include initiatives and programs designed to create a safer environment for students attending university. These measures often include ride-share programs, self-defense training, and courses in crime prevention strategies. Most schools also offer evening safety escort shuttles (Marisa, 2022). Practicing safety measures on campus can help to reduce risk and prevent harm. Increasing students' awareness of potential risks and making sure they have access to tools to help them stay safe are essential parts of dimension of university safety (Hseblog.com, 2022). Universities need to report their latest campus crime statistics and disclose their campus safety and security policies.

Some essential campus safety tips that can be of help as reported by Marisa (2022) and EHS Insight Resources (2020) are as follows:

- 1. Know one's way around campus: One should consider downloading a campus map and get to know one's way around school during the day when students and faculty fill the campus.
- 2. Using Lock: Always lock dorm room or apartment door. This major deterrent can stop thieves in their tracks. Also, lock of car doors (even when driving) and keep valuables out of sight could also be of help.
- 3. Never work alone after dark: Always use the buddy system when walking at night. Most schools also offer a campus escort shuttle.
- 4. Know where the emergency systems are on campus: Scout out the emergency blue light phones so you know their locations. If you forgot your phone or have a dead battery, you can use these phones to contact the public safety office directly.
- 5. Consider carrying a whistle, pepper spray, or alarm: Any type of personal defense option, such as pepper spray or a whistle, may help stop an attack or alert a bystander that you're in trouble.
- 6. Take a self-defence class: Knowing specific self-defense tactics can increase the odds of fending off an attacker. Many schools offer these classes for credit or for free.
- 7. Take advantage of campus escort services: Most schools offer campus escort services, particularly at night. Call the public safety office for contact information and hours of operation.
- 8. Be aware of your social media setting: Check your social media settings and make sure only friends can see your posts. Also, disable location finders on social media sites that publicly share this information.
- Avoid drinking too much: Drinking to excess can result in bad choices that put you in difficult and dangerous situations. If you do plan on drinking, never accept a drink poured by someone you don't trust.
- 10. Always have emergency contacts in your phone: Make sure to input emergency contacts, such as the campus safety office, into your phone so you don't need to look them up in an emergency.

### **Goal Achievement of Nigerian Universities**

Every organization is established to achieve an objective or pre-determined goals and the university system globally and in Nigeria is no exception. According to McCaffery (2019), the functions of universities are: pursuit of research and scholarship, high-level specialized education and training, fulfilling the workforce needs of the 'expert society', taking the lead role in intellectual activities, providing services to the region and immediate community, acting as a screening mechanism for entry into professions, and operating as an avenue for social mobility. University education has been classified under tertiary education in Nigeria.

According to Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education (2014), tertiary education is seen as the education given after secondary education in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics and monotechnics including those institutions offering correspondence courses. As stated in the National Policy on Education of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the goals of the tertiary education include to:

i. contributes to national development through high level manpower training;

ii. provide accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in formal and informal education in response to the needs and interest of Nigerians;

iii. provide high-quality career counselling and lifelong learning opportunity that prepare students with knowledge and skills for self-reliance;

iv. reduce skills shortages through the production of relevant skilled workers;

v. promotes and encourage scholarship, entrepreneurship and community service

vi. forge and cement national unity; and

vii. promote national and international understanding and interaction.

Tertiary educational institutions pursue these goals through:

i. quality student intake;

ii. quality teaching and learning;

iii. research and development;

iv. quality facilities, services and resources;

v. the generation and dissemination of knowledge, skills and competencies that contribute to national goals and enable students to succeed in a knowledge-based economy;

vi. access to training funds such as those provided by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) and the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund); and

vii. maintenance of minimum educational standards through appropriate regulatory agencies; and an all-inclusive, credible admission policy for national unity (National Policy on Education, 2013).

The goals of university education in Nigeria can be said to be the development of human capital towards the development of the society. According to the National Policy on Education (2013), University education in Nigeria is expected to contribute optimally to national development by: (a) Intensifying and diversifying its programmes for the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation; (b) Making professional course contents to reflect the national requirements of Nigeria; (c) Making all students, as part of a general programme of all round improvement in university education, to offer general study courses such as history of ideas, philosophy of knowledge, nationalism and Information Technology (IT); (d) Making entrepreneurial skills acquisition a requirement for all Nigerian universities.

Kayode et al. (2014) opined that university goals achievement can be measured in terms of goals approach, system resource approach, internal process approach, strategic constituency approach. According to Kayode, et. al., the goal approach is best used in a place where the goals of the institutions are well defined. This approach concentrates on output in order to discover the indispensable functional objective which include benefit, innovation and quality of the product. Therefore, the graduation rates are adopted in their study for the assessment of university goals achievement. In this era of globalization, the university system is expected to be accountable in their services, most especially in terms of the graduates they produced (Kayode et al., 2014).

### Institution Safety Policy as a Veritable Tool for Goal Achievement in Nigerian Universities

Teaching and learning cannot take place in an unsafe environment. The university authority in addition to ensure effective teaching and learning, is also required to provide educational, physical and mental safety to learners since security is one of the most vital aspects that a person look for in any institution of learning before joining the institution. It is the duty of the university to provide a secure environment to its staff and students since feeling safe and secure on campus allows students to focus on their studies and other collegiate activities without fearing for their well-being. Hence, safety is an important contributing factor to the achievement of goals in Nigerian universities.

Jacob and Musa (2020) observed that the insecurity challenges facing the country is another challenge preventing effective administration and management of higher institutions in Nigeria. The insurgent in the Northern part of Nigeria have attacked many higher institutions disrupting their academic programme, killing students and destroying infrastructural facilities meant for teaching and learning. Insecurity in Nigeria and in the Northeast in particular have done more damages to the educational infrastructural facilities. Many school facilities from basic to higher education have been destroyed by the insurgent. Abubakar (2016) also reported that insecurity have contributed to poor deployment of ICT facilities and administration in the various educational institutions in the northern part of Nigeria. In Abubakar' (2016) submission, these facilities were either burnt down or destroyed by the militants during crises because there is no enough security in most of our schools. Obi (2015) stressed that insecurity and terrorism has been a major challenge to the Nigerian government in recent times. The activities of the Islamic sect had led to loss of lives and properties in the country especially in the Northern part of Nigeria. Some of these activities include bombing, suicide bomb attacks, sporadic shooting of unarmed and innocent citizens, burning of police stations, churches, kidnapping of school girls and women, etc. Kidnapping, rape, armed robbery and political crises, murder, destruction of oil facilities by Niger Delta militants alongside the attacks carried out by Fulani Herdsmen on some communities in the North and South have been another major insecurity challenge facing the country.

Abdulrahim et al. (2022a) reported that throughout the heat of the insurgency, the University of Maiduguri management kept on putting in place suitable strategies to keep the University moving, and the management, despite all odds occasioned by the activities of the insurgency since 2009, stood firm and ensured continued academic activities. In the words of Marguba (2016), the University of Maiduguri which has demonstrated so much resilience by remaining open throughout this difficult period is now witnessing an unprecedented rise in enrolment of students. The Chancellor of the University and other eminent Nigerians have also paid special tribute and expressed congratulatory messages to the Vice Chancellor and his able Management Team for standing to the challenges confronting the University of Maiduguri and taking bold initiatives, with limited resources, to sustain its operations while also sustaining quality and standards (Adeyemi, 2016). The University of Maiduguri academic activities are undisrupted during the Boko Haram insurgency crises that engulf the city of Maiduguri and the entire North Eastern States of Nigeria between 2009 and 2017 (Abdulrahim et al., 2022a).

Another study by Abdulrahim et al. (2022b) on managing educational institution amidst external threats: the experience of university of Maiduguri, Nigeria revealed that there is effective communication between management, staff, students and other stakeholders; guarding and monitoring of campus through the use of joint security personnel, perimeter fencing, modern security equipment and devices. Based on the findings, the University effectiveness were measures of the proper functional in all respects and experiencing of high learner attainment; accomplishment of stated goals and objectives within the given inputs or available resources. The art of creating a peaceful university environment poses great challenges to university's management. Therefore, proper security systems like CCTV and other security equipment should be in place so as to monitor the incomings and outgoings of people in universities in Nigeria. Using biometric scans or other such devices ensure that only students and employees can enter or leave the campus and its buildings. It is also important to conduct security checks from time to time such that the loopholes (if any) can be looked into (Marisa, 2022). Along with the physical security of the students and the employees, it is essential to ensure that important data, networks, software, equipment and

institution's assets are also protected. When it comes to data security, it is important to have a protected network such that it is not easy to hack into.

The importance of safety management in universities in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Safety management, which is the process of identifying, analyzing, and forecasting risks that are considered a threat or risk for organizations, is highly needed at this point of Nigerian university history. Therefore, safety management as an organized attitude to risk management in an organization (Grote, 2012) cannot be of better use than now. Following the systematic methods in safety management, it can guide the organization (especially Nigerian universities) to reach the causes of disasters in a logical way and direct them away from pursuing an unstructured approach based on mental and tact thoughts that lead to waste of time (Taghdisi, 2006). Moreover, safety management system (SMS) can assess the risks and present strategies to reduce and prevent them. This can also provide preparedness actions to cope with the risks (Yorio et al., 2015). In the submission of Jabbari et al., (2019) the SMS is an official framework for safety in performing daily activities that includes safety policy, safety and executive goals, risk assessment, responsibilities and authorities, regulations and procedures, and monitoring and assessment processes. They opined that it is imperative that university administrators should set up the system in their higher education centres with command lines and delegated authorities and organizational and legal tools while aware of the dimensions and components of safety management.

#### Conclusion

This paper has brought to light the importance of institution safety policy as a tool for goals achievement in Nigerian universities. The need to verify and support safety policy in each Nigerian university cannot be overemphasized, and the safety goals of Nigerian universities are clear enough to serve as a tool for goal achievement.

## **Suggestions**

The following suggestions are made:

- 1. The use of effective Safety Management System (SMS) in Nigerian universities.
- 2. Universities in Nigeria must take steps to increase campus security and implement the National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools (NPSSVFS) and Nigeria Country Profile on Occupational Safety and Health in their various campuses.
- 3. Universities in Nigeria should also keep records and report any crimes committed on campuses as well as any threat to campus safety and peace.
- 4. While a university must take reasonable actions to protect its student body, individual students should also bear responsibility for their own safety.
- 5. Awareness, training, and following campus safety tips by members of university community can help to create a safer learning environment.

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