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### Copping-Strategies Against Insecurity in Nigeria: A Narrative Review

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#### Abstract

Nigeria has experienced persistent insecurity in recent decades, manifesting in armed banditry, terrorism, kidnapping, communal conflicts, and farmer–herder clashes. These threats undermine national stability, economic development, and the well-being of citizens. This narrative review synthesizes literature on coping strategies adopted by individuals, communities, and institutions in response to insecurity across Nigeria’s diverse socio-political landscape. Sources were drawn from peer-reviewed articles, government reports, and credible media publications, focusing on both formal and informal responses. Findings reveal a multifaceted coping framework. At the individual level, strategies include situational awareness, avoidance of high-risk areas, livelihood diversification, and reliance on faith-based resilience. Community-level approaches emphasize neighborhood watch groups, community policing, information sharing, and collective vigilance.

Institutional measures encompass military operations, police reforms, deployment of technology-based surveillance, and policy interventions aimed at addressing root causes such as unemployment and poor governance. Despite these efforts, challenges persist, including inadequate coordination between security agencies, limited resources, corruption, and erosion of public trust. The review highlights that effective coping strategies require integration of grassroots initiatives with state-led security policies, underpinned by inclusive governance and sustained socio-economic reforms. Strengthening social cohesion, improving communication channels between citizens and security agencies, and investing in preventive measures are critical. The study concludes that adaptive, context-specific coping mechanisms, when reinforced by political will and community participation, offer a pathway to mitigating insecurity and fostering national resilience in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Copping-Strategies, Insecurity, Nigeria, Psychology

#### Introduction

Insecurity, encompassing various forms of violence and crime, significantly impacts individuals and communities, hindering several aspects of daily life, including education (Sunday, Osaat and Ekechukwu). Jacob, Ukozor and Ayoko) have reported that, insecurity on campuses has led to the disruption of academic activities and has even forced some institutions to shut down [1,2]. According to Abiodun, Ademola, Chinedu, Oluwapamilerin) one of the primary contributing factors to campus insecurity is the inadequacy of security personnel and infrastructure [3]. Many universities are understaffed, relying on a limited number of security personnel to manage vast campuses and diverse populations. Moreover, these resources are often concentrated on protecting administrative buildings and senior staff residences, leaving student areas like hostels and classrooms vulnerable. Additionally, the implementation and maintenance of security technologies like CCTV cameras and access control systems are often hampered by insufficient funding and poor maintenance practices. This lack of infrastructure creates significant security

gaps that are easily exploited by criminals and other threats. In recent years, insecurity has become a growing concern in Nigeria, and universities have not been spared <sup>[4]</sup>. There have been reported cases of armed robbery, kidnapping, and cult clashes on university campuses across the country. These incidents have created a climate of fear and anxiety among students, impacting their well-being and academic performance <sup>[2]</sup>. Furthermore, (Arijesuyo & Olusanya and Ushe) examined that the proliferation of cult activities on campuses is another major driver of insecurity. These groups engage in various disruptive and violent activities, including attacks on students and staff, vandalism of property, and illegal gatherings. This constant threat of violence creates a climate of fear and disrupts academic activities, forcing cancellations of classes and other events <sup>[1]</sup>. Moreover, the fear of abduction, assault, or even death due to cult activities takes a significant toll on the mental well-being of students and staffs, further hindering their academic performance and overall well-being.

In recent years, concerns about escalating insecurity have plagued the student community at the Federal University of Lafia (FULafia) in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Recurring incidents of kidnappings, armed robberies, and other security threats have instilled fear and anxiety among students, negatively impacting their academic engagement and overall educational experience. Understanding the root causes and consequences of insecurity within Nigerian tertiary institutions is crucial for developing effective solutions.

The Federal University of Lafia (FULAFIA), established in 2011, is a young and growing university located in Lafia, the capital of Nasarawa State in North-Central Nigeria. As with many universities in Nigeria, FULAFIA students face various challenges, including insecurity. Insecurity can be broadly defined as the state of being subject to danger or injury, anxiety, fear, worry, uncertainty, unsafe or threatened. It can stem from various factors, including crime, violence, political instability, and social unrest.

### Conceptual Framework

There is no agreed-upon definition of security because the concept has been explored from many different perspectives. Igbozor and Olise stressed the absence of threats to a nation's peace, stability, national cohesion, political, and economical objectives when defining security. It is the condition of having food, health, and a respectable job, as well as not being frightened of abuse, physical or psychological violence, persecution, or death. Furthermore, according to Omede, security is a dynamic state that takes into account a state's relative ability to defend its core interests and values.

According to Nwanegbo and Odigbo, security can also be defined as the following: safety or protection from emotional stress that results from the assurance or knowing that one is wanted, accepted, loved, and protected in one's community or neighborhood and by people around them; predictability of daily life (knowing what to expect); protection from crime (feeling safe); and freedom from psychological harm. It also highlights a person's psychological and emotional sense of inclusion in a social group that may offer protection. The concept of security was divided into categories in this explanation of the material that came before it combining these elements yields a composite concept of security that includes defense against

financial, psychological, and bodily harm. However, some contend that the ability to react swiftly and skillfully to the challenges posed by these risks constitutes security, not the lack of threats or security issues. It requires defense against disruptive disruptions and protection from enduring threats. All techniques used to safeguard the public and the property of individuals, organizations, businesses, and the government against theft or violent acts are included in the category of security.

The various approaches to the conceptualization of human security in the theoretical literature can be divided into two main strands, according to Nwanegbo & Odigbo and Ewetan & Urhie). One is a neo-realist theoretical school that views the state's primary duties as being security. The second strand, known as the pluralist or postmodernist perspective, replaces the state as the primary source of security by seeing non-state actors as having security obligations.

There are several meanings associated with the term "insecurity," including: lack of protection, danger, uncertainty, and lack of safety. According to Best, insecurity is a degraded stage of conflict that involves risks to human security and intense violence, including fighting, deaths, and injuries. Olanmosu, defines insecurity as a major challenge that threatens the survival of a social system or institution. Insecurity poses a threat to organizations, societies, and systems. According to Béland, insecurity can be defined as "a state of fear or anxiety resulting from a perceived or actual lack of protection." It alludes to scarcity or insufficient safety from harm. Insecurity is defined by Achumba *et al.*, from two angles. First of all, being exposed to danger or the fear of it is the state of being insecure, whereas danger is the state of being vulnerable to damage or injury. Secondly, insecurity is being vulnerable to danger or experiencing worry, which is defined as an ill-defined, unpleasant feeling brought on by the expectation of bad things happening. The key idea that these definitions of insecurity highlight is that people who experience it are not only unsure of what might happen or not knowing what to expect, but they are also open to threats and hazards when they materialize.

### Insecurity in Nigeria

Numerous scholars have recognized insecurity in Nigeria as a barrier to socioeconomic and national development. These causes have been divided into two categories: External and internal. Internal factors of insecurity in Nigeria have a greater impact on socio-economic growth than external causes.

### Ethno-religious conflicts

Distrust between ethnic groups and religions in the country has led to these issues. According to Ibrahim & Igbozor, ethno-religious conflict is a significant contributor to insecurity in Nigeria. Ethno-religious conflict occurs when members of one ethnic or religious group have a lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion, and fear, leading to violent confrontation in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. Ethnic and religious conflicts between Islam and Christianity represent a substantial threat to national security. Ibrahim & Igbozor argue that ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria stem from new forms of political awareness and identification, often centered on ethnic identities. In Nigeria, conflicts over resources, power, land, local government, markets, and

sharia have resulted in fatalities and carnage. Ethnoreligious conflicts have become increasingly common in Nigeria. This has happened in the states of Shagamu (Ogun), Lagos, Abia, Kano, Bauchi, Nasarawa, Jos, Taraba, Ebonyi, and Enugu. Ethnoreligious identities pose a threat to Nigeria's stability and security.

### Weak Security System

According to Achumba *et al*), the government's security apparatus lacks proper training and armament. Additionally, security personnel exhibit unfavorable attitudes and behaviors. Security personnel often lack the requisite expertise and equipment to prevent certain security issues. Even when they exist, some troops are easily swayed by ethnic, religious, or community passions, prioritizing serving their people over the nation. Government officials can become government saboteurs by leaking security information, assisting criminals in acquiring weapons, and evading the law, rather than serving as national watchdogs and protecting citizens.

### Unemployment and Poverty

Unemployment and poverty in Nigeria, particularly among youths, increase the risk of violent crime. According to Nwagboso), Nigeria's insecurity stems from previous administrations' failure to address poverty, unemployment, and unequal wealth distribution among ethnicities. Unemployment negatively impacts Nigeria's national development as it affects the majority of the productive workforce. According to Salawu), poverty and unemployment may lead to an increase in willingness to kill or be killed for a perceived benefit. It may lead to unlawful behavior that threatens environmental security.

### Terrorism

Terrorism is the principal source of instability in Nigeria, fueled by religious extremism and intolerance, especially in Muslim-majority areas. Sampson and Onuoha define terrorism as "the premeditated use or threat of use of violence by an individual or group to cause fear, destruction or death, especially against unarmed targets, property, or infrastructure in a state, intended to compel those in authority to respond to the demands and expectations of the individual or group behind such violent acts." Terrorism is a global phenomenon with no one safe. Terrorism in Nigeria is an Islamic insurgency with political undertones by an anonymous organization known as Boko Haram that is headquartered in the nation's north and takes into consideration the justifiable political, social, and economic complaints of the people living there. Since 2009, Nigeria has suffered up to 1000 fatalities in the North due to the insurgency of the notorious Islamic group, Boko Haram.

### Insecurity in Nigerian Universities

Security concerns are prevalent issues in Nigerian education today. Insecurity in universities and colleges has serious effects for education, the economy, and society at large. As Nigeria strives for a robust, democratic, and equal society, it is crucial to address this issue. Education has a crucial role in people's development. According to Chinedu *et al*, education is a significant part of most governments' annual budgets. Education is to equip individuals with knowledge, skills, and abilities to benefit themselves and society. Unfortunately, because of the country's ongoing insecurity,

the ambitious goals for education set forth in the Federal Republic of Nigeria's constitution have not come to pass. This is due to the fact that peaceful, supportive environments free from insecurity are necessary for good teaching and learning to take place.

The goal of higher education in Nigeria can only be achieved, according to Ogunode, Okwelogu, Elechukwu, and Yahaya, cited by Garba *et al*) when the environment of tertiary institutions is safe, secure, and supportive of teaching, learning, and the execution of research programs. This is the opposite of what many Nigerian higher education institutions are dealing with. There are issues with insecurity at Nigeria's higher education institutions. According to Enang, cited by Umar *et al*) university communities have recently been plagued by a variety of crimes that, regrettably, present a murky and depressing image. Numerous schools, especially higher education institutions in the north, have been forced to close due to ongoing attacks that result in the deaths or kidnappings of staff members and students as well as the burning of premises. Ogunode *et al.*, posits that attacks on tertiary institutions, including academic personnel, non-academic staff, and students, cannot ensure the long-term development of education in Nigeria.

As terrorism, kidnapping, banditry, assassinations, ritual murders, armed robberies, civil disobedience, and other violent crimes have become the norm, insecurity has spread throughout the world. In Nigeria, the prevalence of insecurity is rising in our culture. The recent wave of kidnappings and armed robberies in the South, coupled with the ongoing kidnapping, bombings, and banditry in the North, has had a detrimental impact on the nation's political, social, economic, and educational growth. Many of the heroin crimes that are currently being noticed in society affect schoolchildren as well as students in secondary and postsecondary institutions.

According to Jacob *et al*), insecurity over the last five years has resulted in over 11,000 separate attacks on educational facilities destroyed by various forms of crisis in the Nigerian education sector <sup>[2]</sup>. These attacks on education include bombings, school burnings, rapes of students, adoptions of staff and students, the attempted abduction of the vice-chancellor of Ambrose Alli University in 2020, the student attack of 2019 that resulted in the deaths of one medical student, one law student, one master's student in architecture, the son of the former chairman of Esan West, Hon. Abulu, and another 300-level student who was also killed in cold blood <sup>[10]</sup>.

### Insecurity in the Higher Education

Research on the effects of insecurity on higher education According to several researchers, it has a negative impact on higher education. For example, Ekpoh *et al*) discovered in his study that one of the reasons contributing significantly to insecurity in Nigerian institutions was a lack of security personnel training. Cited by Ekpoh *et al*, Dagogo conducted research on the role of security agents in reducing crime in higher education institutions in North East Nigeria, examining four universities and three polytechnics. The study's sample consisted of 900 respondents who were chosen on purpose. The data were evaluated using a population test, and the results showed that training and retraining security personnel has a considerable impact on their level of service delivery.

Another study by Ozmen *et al*) on school security issues and solutions discovered that there were numerous threats to school security, including a lack of family interest, inadequate physical condition, and a disruptive school atmosphere, among others. The study proposed developing an emergency action plan to deal with dangerous and destructive conditions, as well as establishing an emergency communication line to connect necessary units and organizations for prompt support and assistance in threatening scenarios. According to Chekwa *et al*) research of 20 college students, burglary was the most common crime committed on campus, with 85% of respondents saying so. In addition, security agents, cameras, emergency call boxes, and lights were ranked in order of priority by respondents as deterrents to criminal activity. The study found that the audible emergency alarm system was not a factor in crime prevention.

Elozino Ogege, a 300-level female student at Delta State University Abraka's Department of Mass Communication, was murdered in a bush by a bunch of guys known as the "yahoo boys" on November 19, 2018. Her body was discovered in Ekrejata's Abraka village, with her tongue and breasts severed. There have been multiple reports of ritual killings, rape, armed robbery, and the abduction of schoolchildren to unknown destinations by unknown individuals. Many Nigerians have expressed concern about insecurity on higher institution campuses. Aguba) criticized the cases of kidnapping, militancy, armed robbery, and cultism that resulted in fatalities in institutions. He argued that the killing, assassination, and maiming of some tertiary students and professors had increased the level of dread among students and staff. Nigeria's first international security summit, held from September 16 to 18, 2010, was the outcome of the country's insecurity [5]. Criminal activity disrupts the achievement of educational goals and objectives [6, 1].

Badiora) conducted a spatial analysis of crime patterns and safety issues at a Nigerian university. According to the findings, the five most common crimes on campus include theft and pilfering, room break-ins, sexual harassment, cultism, and drug offenses [7]. Another study conducted by Oladipo *et al* examined institutional factors that posed threats to personnel security at the University of Lagos and discovered a strong positive relationship between school location, school culture, school facilities, and personnel security, as well as a weak, positive correlation between school climate and personnel security [8]. The study concluded that hostile school environments, overburdened and inadequate learning facilities, indiscipline, an outdated security framework, poor staff and student safety and security awareness, insufficient capacity building for security personnel, inadequate institutional funding, and so on were the major determinants of security lapses on campus.

Ekpoh *et al* did research on security concerns in universities and its implications for a safe learning environment. According to the findings, the most common security concerns were cult-related activities, kidnapping, drug abuse/offences, unlawful possession of guns by students, student restiveness/demonstrations, the students' union election crisis, room break-ins, stealing and pilfering, and sexual assaults [9]. Inadequate security personnel, insufficient patrol vehicles, poor lighting of university environments, non-availability of modern security facilities,

poor funding of security departments, porous campus environments, lack of security-awareness education, non-availability of electronic gadgets, and other factors all contributed to the failure of universities to conduct effective security checks. Solomon & Solomon conducted a study to analyze the cause, impact, and potential solutions to the country's educational system's awful insecurity scenario, with Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State, and Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State, as the emphasis [10]. The findings for research question 1 revealed that the causes of insecurity in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State and Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State include cult clashes between rival cult groups, unlawful prevention of students from participating in exams or tests, hunger, inflation, unemployment, communal, student violent agitations, and youth unrest, lack of proper governance in tertiary schools, violent opposition to exploitation by school administration and personnel, which has an impact on institutions, constant increases in school and hostel fees, and planned mass failure by lecturers, among other factors, are key causes of insecurity in higher institutions.

Another study conducted by Okechukwu & Afamefuna on security challenges and management strategies in secondary schools discovered that kidnapping, armed robbery, militancy, drug abuse, vandalism, theft, and cultism were among the security challenges encountered in the schools studied in Aba Education Zone, Abia State [11]. Mensah *et al* concluded that university campuses are no longer safe havens [12]. Similarly, Enang observed that university communities in recent years have been infested with a variety of criminalities, which, unfortunately, create an opaque and rather gloomy picture [13]. Abdullahi & Orukpe and Enang, found that theft, cultism, kidnapping, rape, room break-in, office break-in, mobile phone snatching, shoplifting, a violent demonstration by students, graffiti, and other forms of assault are serious security concerns on campuses [14, 13]. Oladipo *et al.*, noticed that the presence of cultist organizations on campus has made life dangerous and scary for both staff and students. It was said that cultists had more lethal and functional weapons than campus security organizations and frequently use supernatural and magical powers in their actions [8].

### Coping strategies

Despite the security challenges, there is still hope for Nigeria. Nigeria must handle its security concerns by innovative thinking and political will. Possible solutions include conducting a reliable census, educating the public, reforming security agencies, and creating more jobs. According to Kpee & Osiobe, to address security concerns in Nigeria, accurate and trustworthy data on all individuals within the country's boundaries is necessary [15]. Accurate census data is crucial for understanding Nigeria's population composition. The census will collect information on age, identity, status, qualification, employment, gender, and state/local government of origin to distinguish between employed and jobless individuals. With a dependable database, security issues can be easily resolved with a single button press.

Udeoba & Eze claims that effective administration is the solution to Nigeria's insecurity problem [16]. The author argues that overcoming insecurity requires fostering a culture of good governance, where the government is accountable to the people. She believes that security



engagement is inextricably linked to effective governance. Many have linked security to the government structure good governance, according to popular belief, is the foundation of peace and stability. Gilbert & Allen) defines good governance as effective, visionary, transparent, trustworthy, and credible political leadership that prioritizes improving citizens' collective well-being through well-conceived economic policies and human development programmes [17]. Good governance prioritizes the well-being of individuals as its primary goal.

### Gender Differences in Coping Strategies

Gender may influence how students deal with insecurity. Previous studies examined gender variations in coping techniques. Research suggests that women are more likely to utilize emotion-focused and avoidance coping strategies, whereas men tend to use problem-focused strategies [18, 19]. According to Matud the magnitude of gender differences is moderate to small, yet still significant [20].

Women may feel more vulnerable to sexual harassment or assault, which shapes their perceptions of threats [21]. One potential difference lies in the types of threats perceived. According to Trickett *et al*), female students may feel more vulnerable to sexual harassment or assault, making them more aware of safety risks in their environment than their male counterparts [22]. This increased sense of vulnerability can influence their coping strategies. Studies have found that women may be more likely to engage in emotion-focused coping mechanisms, such as seeking social support from friends, family, or counselors [23]. Talking to reliable people about their worries and experiences can help them feel less alone and more validated.

Men, on the other hand, may choose problem-focused coping strategies. Endler & Parker (1990) [24] discovered that men prefer to use active coping strategies, such as problem solving or engaging in activities to address the source of stress or insecurity [24]. This strategy may include techniques such as joining neighborhood watch groups or attending self-defense lessons to help people feel more empowered and in control of their own safety.

### Socioeconomic Status and Coping Strategies

Socio-economic status refers to the social and economic position of individuals or families within a society, encompassing various dimensions such as income, parental education level, occupation, and access to resources and opportunities [25]. Students' experiences and responses to insecurity are heavily influenced by their socioeconomic background. According to Vadivel *et al* Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may have limited access to safe housing, transportation, or security measures, making them vulnerable to attacks, putting their security at stake [26]. Scholars such as Munir *et al* have noted that students with lower socioeconomic status have restricted access to safe housing, dependable transportation, and security measures [27]. This lack of resources makes them more vulnerable to crime and violence in unprotected academic settings.

Additionally, as reported by Jack-Ide & Uys, access to mental health services is impeded by financial limitations [28]. Their capacity to cope with the psychological anguish linked to insecurity is hindered by this limitation. While the work of researchers such as Evans & De France provide useful insights, a critical discussion is required. Socio-economic status is a broad concept, and coping mechanisms

may differ depending on factors such as family support networks and cultural backgrounds [29]. Furthermore, Yang *et al* and Zeng & X found a link between low Socio-economic status and increased psychological distress, emphasizing the importance of accessible and culturally sensitive mental health resources, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds in insecure university environments [30, 31].

### Institutional Support and Coping Strategies

Insecurity in Nigeria has become a major concern for both the government and its citizens. Government alone cannot provide security and long-term growth for citizens. Higher education in Nigeria is often linked to security challenges and sustainable development issues, to address insecurity, education plays a crucial role in providing security and promoting sustainable development. The widespread prevalence of insecurity in Nigerian public universities necessitates a proactive response from educational institutions. According to Clapper, Universities have a responsibility to provide a safe and supportive learning environment to all students [32]. This can be accomplished by executing a multifaceted strategy that combines strong security measures with suitable means of coping.

Creating a safe physical environment is the starting point. According to Wilson) this involves keeping enough security officers on campus, ensuring good lighting throughout the university, and developing clear emergency protocols that all students are aware of effective communication channels should be established to keep students updated on security issues and response methods [33].

Worsley, Pennington, and Corcoran) Suggest that University can improve student well-being by providing accessible mental health services. These resources, such as counseling and support groups, can provide students with the tools they need to cope with worry, fear, and trauma caused by insecurity. Workshops and awareness campaigns can help students learn about self-defense methods, personal safety precautions, and the services available at the university [34]. During the event of COVID-19, Gelles *et al* suggest that Universities should also look into flexible learning options for students who are particularly concerned about attending in-person sessions, this can be applicable for students due to insecurity. This could include providing online courses, recorded lectures, or alternate learning arrangements that enable students to continue their studies afar [35].

Universities can help students cope with the challenges of an insecure environment by prioritizing student safety, offering access to mental health resources, and cultivating an awareness and readiness culture. This coordinated effort among students, and university administration plays an important role in creating a learning environment that promotes resilience and academic performance despite the obstacles that face students.

### Theoretical Framework

Theories could be regarded as systems of thoughts or concepts carefully formulated, tested to expound and predict certain phenomenon, mostly those hinged on common ideologies, which are independent of the phenomenon been elucidated. Theories are formulated to analyze or explain social life issues affecting mankind. Social learning and Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory will be used to provide foundation for this study.

## Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura proposed social learning theory. The notion suggests that individuals can learn from each other through observation, imitation, and modeling. Albert Bandura blended principles from behaviorism and cognitive learning. He stresses studying and mimicking people's behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions. According to social learning theory, individuals can learn new behaviors by seeing and copying others. In the context of a university setting, fear might arise from witnessing and internalizing undesirable behaviors associated with riots and a lack of peace on campus. For example, students who frequently observe or hear about campus turmoil, protests, or violence may develop concerns about their own safety and academic stability. Reinforcement is also important; positive or negative reinforcement can help to solidify behaviors. For example, if students gain attention or affirmation for expressing concerns about campus safety, their conduct may be encouraged. Cognitive processes are also important, with negative attitudes and self-talk about campus safety influenced by witnessing others adding to students' unease. Social Learning Theory defines coping strategies as learnt behaviors that can be obtained by imitating good behaviors in turbulent settings. Observing role models, such as university faculty or students, who handle stress and remain calm during times of disturbance, can help you learn effective tactics. Social reinforcement, such as encouragement and praise for being calm and attentive during times of instability, strengthens these behaviors. Cognitive rehearsal, which includes positive self-talk and visualization, aids in the replacement of negative beliefs with affirmations of personal safety and academic achievement. Insecurity caused by riots and lack of peace has a substantial impact on students' academic performance, social interactions, and mental well-being. Students who are insecure may suffer academically owing to anxiety and a lack of trust in their safety, whereas those who use positive coping mechanisms are more likely to do well and maintain healthier social interactions. Learning and using positive coping methods can improve emotional resilience and general well-being, highlighting the value of a supportive environment in creating better habits even in difficult situations. Universities can leverage this principle by creating opportunities for students to witness and adopt safe behaviors.

Baik, Larcombe and Brooker) proposed that universities can strengthen the social learning system by encouraging open communication between students and university staffs <sup>[36]</sup>. Academic advisers or staff members can function as resources for students experiencing the psychological effects of insecurity <sup>[37]</sup>. Universities can show their dedication to the well-being of their students and foster a sense of trust within the campus community by offering a safe area where students can voice their concerns and seek assistance. With its emphasis on community development, group support, and easily accessible teacher support, this all-encompassing strategy can help students overcome insecurity and succeed academically <sup>[38]</sup>.

The idea of vicarious reinforcement—in which people learn by witnessing the results of other people's actions, is another idea that social learning theory highlights <sup>[39]</sup>. Universities can make use of this idea by praising students in public when they report suspicious activities or behave in a way that prioritizes safety. This encouraging feedback makes

being vigilant even more important and motivates others to follow suit. In a similar vein, elevating the benefits of student usage of mental health services can normalize asking for assistance and inspire others to do the same. Universities may foster a culture of safety and equip students to deal with the difficulties of an unstable environment by carefully applying these tactics.

A valuable structure for addressing insecurity in Nigerian universities is provided by the Social Learning Theory <sup>[40]</sup>. Universities may provide students with the information, skills, and feeling of community needed to overcome obstacles and succeed academically by carefully implementing modeling safe behaviors, vicarious reinforcement, and collective efficacy. Subsequent investigations may examine the efficaciousness of executing social learning theory-based interventions in Nigerian academic institutions.

## Maslow's Hierarchy of needs

Social Learning Theory (SLT) provides helpful information into how behaviors, such as insecurity, are learned through observation and reinforcement; it may not fully address the underlying needs that underpin human motivation and behavior in a university setting. SLT is largely concerned with the exterior processes of learning via observation, imitation, and modeling, which are clearly significant. However, it often overlooks the internal reasons and fundamental human needs that drive conduct. In a campus setting beset by insecurity, riots, and a lack of calm, this limitation becomes especially important. Students in such an environment may develop concerns about their safety and academic stability, and while SLT can explain how they may learn coping mechanisms or maladaptive behaviors from their surroundings, it does not necessarily prioritize the importance of a secure and stable environment for effective learning and personal development.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs offers a more comprehensive framework for understanding the impact of insecurity on students' learning environments. Maslow's theory, which presents a tiered model of human needs ranging from basic physiological needs to self-actualization, suggests that individuals must have their lower-level needs, such as safety and security, met before they can focus on higher-level needs like belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. This model emphasizes the profound impact of environmental instability on students, stating that when students do not feel safe, their ability to concentrate, engage, and perform academically suffers significantly. Consequently, Maslow's framework is a more appropriate strategy for tackling the difficulties brought on by insecurity and unrest in a university setting since it more accurately depicts the domino effects of unfulfilled safety needs on students' general well-being and academic achievement.

Nigeria's educational sector faces security concerns that affect both safety and property. This paper used Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as the theoretical foundation for analysis. According to Kpee and Osiobe, a peaceful and conflict-free setting is essential for effective teaching and learning <sup>[15]</sup>. According to Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, humans are driven by complicated needs and wants that are prioritized in order of importance.

Maslow's hierarchy divided needs into lower and higher order needs. The first four levels include: 1) Physiological needs such as hunger, thirst, and physiological comforts; 2)

Safety and security from harm; 3) Belongingness and love to connect with people and be accepted; and 4) Esteem to attain success and recognition. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the needs that prioritize growth over self-interest include: 5) Cognitive: knowledge, understanding, and exploration; 6) Aesthetic: symmetry, order, and beauty; 7) Self-actualization: self-fulfillment and potential realization; and 8) Self-transcendence: connecting to something beyond the ego or assisting others in doing the same <sup>[41]</sup>.

After satisfying physiological demands, safety needs emerge, including protection against danger, injury, disorderliness, dread, anxiety, attack, relocation, war, and crime.

According to Kpee and Osiobe, safety and security require order, legislation, and limits on freedom <sup>[15]</sup>. According to Aruma and Hanchor, safety and security needs encompass a range of threats to peaceful coexistence and harmony in society, including crises, conflicts, wars, clashes, civil disturbances, riots, militancy, terrorism, kidnapping, armed robbery, and killings. In Nigeria's northern areas, Boko Haram is spreading chaos and destroying lives and property <sup>[42]</sup>. Schools in Boko Haram-prone states such as Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Bauchi, and Jigawa are at risk, making it difficult for communities to develop in such chaotic environments <sup>[42]</sup>.

According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, students may find it extremely difficult to advance in their academic and personal development if they feel unsafe in their classroom, especially in the face of unrest. Before focusing on higher-order needs like love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization, Maslow argues that people must first attend to their basic physiological and safety needs. Insecure environments make students feel unsafe, limiting their ability to concentrate, fully engage in their studies, and participate in social and academic activities. This insecurity can cause increased anxiety, poor academic performance, and a decline in overall well-being. In such environments, effective coping strategies frequently include seeking peer and faculty support, participating in stress-reduction activities, and advocating for increased campus safety measures.

However, while Maslow's theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the fundamental impact of safety on student behavior, it has been criticized for its hierarchical structure and the assumption that needs must be met in a specific order. Some scholars argue that human needs are more fluid and can be met concurrently rather than sequentially. Furthermore, Maslow's hierarchy may not fully account for the social and observational learning components emphasized by Social Learning Theory. SLT emphasizes the importance of role models and social reinforcement in shaping behavior, which can help us understand how students develop coping strategies in insecure environments. Despite these criticisms, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs remains a useful tool for emphasizing the importance of addressing basic safety needs so that students can thrive academically and personally in a safe and supportive environment.

## Conclusion

Coping strategies against insecurity in Nigeria require a multifaceted approach combining community resilience, effective governance, and technological innovations.

Strengthening security agencies, promoting intelligence sharing, and addressing root causes such as poverty and unemployment remain crucial. Equally important are grassroots initiatives fostering unity and vigilance. A sustained, collaborative effort among government, civil society, and citizens is essential to mitigate threats, enhance safety, and create an environment conducive to peace and national development.

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