Insecurity threats and the sustainability of quality education in higher institutions of Sokoto State

JUNAIDU, Abubakar Jabo

Department of Political Science, Education
Shehu Shagari University of Education Sokoto
Phone/Email: *+2348060547557/abubakarjjabo@gmail.com*

Aminu Musa (Dr.)

Department of Educational Management
Sokoto state University
Phone/Email: *+2348036132079*

Abstract

The study examined the insecurity threats and the sustainability of quality education in higher institutions of Sokoto state, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was employed. The population of the study comprises all the students and Lecturers (staff) of the eleven tertiary institutions in Sokoto State. According to Sokoto State Education Accounts (2023/2024), there are 982,536 students and staff in Sokoto State tertiary institutions. A sample size of 397 lecturers (staff) and 393 students' total 790 respondents were selected using research advisors (2006). Purposive sampling was used to select five higher institutions outside the out sketch of Sokoto Metropolis. Similarly, proportionate sampling was used to select participants proportionate to the size of the selected institutions. The data collected was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25, using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation. The study revealed that there were moderate lecturers' (staff) perceptions of insecurity threats in higher institutions, there were poor students' perceptions of insecurity threats in higher institutions, and there was poor level of insecurity threats in higher institutions. The study recommended that higher institutions in Sokoto State should continue to enhance their security frameworks by investing in surveillance systems, campus security personnel, and emergency response mechanisms. Higher institutions should establish formal partnerships with traditional rulers, religious leaders, and local vigilante groups in maintaining security. The government should maintain and strengthen its intervention strategies, including funding security initiatives in higher institutions and ensuring the presence of well-equipped security personnel on campuses.

Keywords: Insecurity Threats, Quality Education, Higher Institutions, Sokoto State, Sustainability.

Introduction

Insecurity continues to be a critical issue in Nigeria, significantly impacting various sectors, including education. The escalation of security threats such as terrorism, banditry, kidnappings, and communal conflicts has profoundly disrupted educational activities, particularly in northern Nigeria (Abdulrasheed et al., 2015). Sokoto State, akin to other states in the region, faces increasing security challenges that pose a severe threat to the sustainability of quality education in higher institutions. The presence of armed groups, attacks on educational facilities, and general instability have created an unsafe learning environment, negatively affecting students' academic performance, lecturers' efficiency, and overall institutional governance (Eze, 2020).

Sustainable quality education is indispensable for national development, as it facilitates human capital formation and socio-economic growth (UNESCO, 2021). However, persistent insecurity disrupts academic calendars, discourages investment in educational infrastructure, and compels students and lecturers to relocate, leading to declining enrollment and retention rates (Ogunode, 2022). Additionally, the psychological impact of insecurity on both students and educators detrimentally influences learning outcomes, resulting in diminished productivity and inefficient knowledge dissemination (Yusuf, 2019).

The security of lives and property is a fundamental prerequisite for national development, including educational progress. Education plays a pivotal role in shaping a nation's advancement, permeating various aspects of society, contributing to human resource development, and reinforcing cultural values (Famous, 2023). Individual competencies, fostered through education, enhance societal economic progress by improving productivity and governance. As the bedrock of Nigeria's national development, the educational sector faces grave challenges due to prevailing insecurity, making it impossible for any nation to thrive amidst turmoil. The pervasive insecurity in Nigeria necessitates urgent and extraordinary measures to mitigate its impact on education.

Insecurity is a global concern, affecting nations worldwide without exception. Contemporary threats such as terrorism, warfare, and cross-border political violence are increasingly perceived as more severe than in the past, leading to higher civilian casualties. Within Nigeria, particularly in Sokoto State, insecurity has emerged as a significant impediment to higher education. The growing threats of banditry, kidnapping, communal conflicts, and student-related violence have substantially disrupted academic activities, fostering an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. These security challenges not only jeopardize the safety of students and staff but also threaten the quality and sustainability of education in the region.

Review of Related Literature

One of the most pressing security concerns in Sokoto State is the rising incidence of banditry and kidnappings. Armed groups have increasingly targeted students and lecturers, especially in institutions situated in rural or peripheral urban areas. The fear of abduction has resulted in reduced student enrollment, frequent absenteeism, and reluctance among lecturers

to accept postings to certain institutions. This has further strained an already fragile educational system, as institutions struggle to maintain academic continuity amid security threats.

Although terrorism and insurgency are more prevalent in northeastern Nigeria, their effects have extended to Sokoto State. The activities of extremist groups create a climate of fear, discouraging students and lecturers from fully engaging in academic pursuits. Many institutions have attempted to implement additional security measures, yet these efforts remain inadequate given the evolving nature of security challenges. For instance, on October 2, 2024, armed assailants attacked the central market of UsmanuDanfodiyo University at approximately 10 p.m., firing shots to instill fear among students and looting several shops, resulting in one person sustaining injuries (Adeyemi, 2024). This incident heightened fears among students and raised concerns regarding the sufficiency of security protocols on campuses.

Communal conflicts and ethno-religious tensions further exacerbate insecurity in higher education. Disputes between various ethnic and religious groups often escalate into violence, occasionally spilling over onto university campuses. A notable instance occurred on May 12, 2022, at Shehu Shagari College of Education in Sokoto, where a female student, Deborah, was killed by a mob following allegations of blasphemy (The Nation, 2022). This incident led to the immediate closure of the institution and heightened religious tensions within the academic community, fostering divisions among students and staff and undermining the unity that educational institutions should ideally promote. Similarly, on September 29, 2024, operatives from the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) conducted early morning raids on private hostels at UsmanuDanfodiyo University, Sokoto, arresting several students. These operations sparked unrest and raised concerns regarding student safety and rights. These events underscore the urgent need for enhanced security measures and proactive strategies to safeguard academic communities in Sokoto State.

Insecurity within the education sector manifests through multiple dimensions, including physical threats, psychological distress, socio-political instability, and economic disruptions. Ofor-Douglas (2023) posits that insecurity leads to school closures, loss of lives and property, and psychological trauma among students and staff. Similarly, Adams et al. (2021) describe insecurity as a disruption of peace arising from historical, ethnic, religious, civil, and political factors, which significantly impact Nigeria's educational system.

Review of Empirical Literature

Insecurity in education encompasses multiple dimensions, including physical threats, psychological distress, socio-political instability, and economic disruptions. Ofor-Douglas (2023) argues that insecurity leads to school closures, loss of lives and property, and psychological trauma among students and staff. Similarly, Adams et al. (2021) describe insecurity as a disruption of peace arising from historical, ethnic, religious, civil, and political factors, significantly affecting Nigeria's educational system.

Several studies highlight the adverse effects of insecurity on higher education in Nigeria. Alhassan and Risikat (2024) examined how dominant regional sectors influence insecurity and its impact on education in Sokoto, Kebbi, and Zamfara states. The study found that economic factors contribute to insecurity, which in turn affects educational sustainability. Similarly, Bashar et al. (2021) investigated student indiscipline and its management in Sokoto State's tertiary institutions, identifying indiscipline as a factor leading to academic corruption, sexual harassment, and declining educational standards.

However, Linus et al. (2024) explored the impact of insecurity on tertiary institutions in Plateau State, revealing that insecurity leads to loss of academic manpower, infrastructural destruction, school closures, and reduced private investment in education. Ogunode et al. (2023) studied the impact of insecurity on higher education in Nigeria, concluding that insecurity has led to reduced investment, loss of students and staff, and disruptions in teaching, research, and community service programs.

Victor, Solomon, and Vivian (2024) examine the various ways in which insecurity disrupts higher education in Nigeria. They define insecurity as a state of vulnerability to threats, which adversely affects academic institutions by causing student attrition, disrupting academic activities, and leading to the destruction of essential infrastructure. Their study emphasizes the need for comprehensive security measures to safeguard educational institutions and ensure the uninterrupted delivery of academic programs.

Similarly, Nwakpa (2015) assesses the implications of insecurity on quality education in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The study highlights how insecurity forces school closures, leads to student withdrawals, and creates an atmosphere of fear that significantly hampers learning. The author recommends several interventions, including increased funding for education, regular security training for staff and students, and the installation of surveillance systems such as CCTV cameras to enhance safety within academic environments.

Abiodun (2024) further explores the adverse effects of insecurity on university education in Nigeria. His research identifies how persistent security threats have led to an unstable academic calendar, loss of lives among students and academic staff, and a decline in research activities. The study argues that addressing the root causes of insecurity, increasing investment in the security sector, and deploying advanced security technologies are critical steps toward protecting university campuses and ensuring educational sustainability.

Despite existing studies, there remains a lack of institution-specific data on how insecurity affects academic performance, staff well-being, and security policies in higher institutions in Sokoto State. While previous research highlights infrastructural damage and school closures, there is limited exploration of technological solutions and institutional responses to mitigate security threats.

This study aims to assess the extent to which insecurity influences the sustainability of quality education in higher institutions in Sokoto State. It explores the implications of persistent security challenges on students, lecturers, and institutional management while

providing recommendations for ensuring resilient and secured higher education environments despite prevailing security threats.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the level of insecurity Threats to Sustainable Quality Education Delivery in Higher Institutions of Sokoto State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the perception of lecturers on insecurity threats in higher institutions of Sokoto State.

2. Examine the perception of students on insecurity threats in higher institutions of Sokoto State.

3. Examine the level of insecurity threats in higher institutions of Sokoto State.

Research Question:

The following hypotheses were formulated to pilot the study:

1. What is the level of lecturers'perceptionon insecurity threats in higher institutions of Sokoto State?

2. What is the level of students'perception on insecurity threats in higher institutions of Sokoto State?

3. What is the level of insecurity threats in higher institutions of Sokoto State?

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was employed for the study, to describe the level of Insecurity threats in higher institutions of Sokoto State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprises all the students and Lecturers (staff) of the eleven tertiary institutions in Sokoto State. According to Sokoto State Education Accounts (2023/2024), there are 982,536 students and staff in Sokoto State tertiary institutions. A sample size of 397 lecturers (staffs) and 393 students total 790 respondents were selected using research advisors (2006). Purposive sampling will be used to select five higher institutions outside the out sketch of Sokoto Metropolis. Similarly, proportionate sampling was used to select participants proportionate to the size of the selected institutions. The data collected was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25, using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of lecturers' (Staff)perceptionon insecurity threats in higher institutions of Sokoto State?

To answer this research question, the frequencies of the responses on lecturers'

(Staff)perceptionon insecurity threats collected from the 384 were sorted according to the 4-points Likertscale (SA = 4, A = 3, D = 2, SD = 1), with data analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation in SPSS version 23.0. A decision threshold of 2.50 was set, meaning a Mean score of ≥ 2.50 indicates acceptance, while < 2.50 indicates rejection. Teacher effectiveness was assessed using the Grand Mean, categorized as follows: 1.00–1.60 (Very Low), 1.61–2.20 (Low), 2.21–2.80 (Moderate), 2.81–3.40 (High), and 3.41–4.00 (Very High).

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviation Assessing the Extent of Lecturers' (staff) Perceptions of Insecurity Threats in Higher Institutions of Sokoto State

S/N	Environmental Conditions item statements	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Insecurity in higher institutions of Sokoto state has affected academic activities.	18	41	84	249	1.56	0.85	Rejected
2	Higher institutions in Sokoto state are adequate to ensure safety of lecturers and students.	53	52	159	128	2.08	1.00	Rejected
3	Cases of kidnapping, banditry, or other violent attacks have created fear and anxiety among lecturers in higher institutions.	32	96	105	159	2.00	0.99	Rejected
4	The presence of security personnel on campus is sufficient to deter criminal activities.	47	104	127	114	2.21	0.99	Rejected
5	Insecurity has negatively affected lecturers' commitment and effectiveness in teaching and research.	108	75	187	22	2.69	0.94	Accepted
6	The government and university management have taken adequate steps to address insecurity challenges in higher institutions.	120	105	108	59	2.73	1.05	Accepted
7	Insecurity has led to a decline in student enrollment and retention in higher institutions of Sokoto State.	65	95	126	106	2.30	1.04	Rejected
8	There is a need for stronger collaboration between security agencies and university management to improve safety in higher institutions.	94	127	100	71	2.62	1.04	Accepted
	Grand Mean					**2.27**	**0.99**	**Moderate**

Source: *Research Survey, 2024*   **Criterion Mean** = *2.50*

Table 1 revealed that three items (item 5, 6 and 8) out of the eight descriptor statements for assessing lecturers' (staff) perceptions on insecuritythreat have a mean score greater than criterion mean of 2.50 hence were accepted by the respondents while five items (item 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7) have a mean score less than the criterion mean of 2.50 hence were rejected. However, the overall Grand Mean score = 2.27 for all the Mean ratings on lecturers' (staff) perceptions of insecurity threatwas less than the Criterion Mean of 2.50 (Grand Mean

= 2.27 < Criterion Mean = 2.50) and also falls between Grand Mean score = 2.21 – 2.80 which implies that there was moderate lecturers' (staff) perceptions of insecurity threats in higher institutions of Sokoto State.

Research Question 2: What is the level of students'perception on insecurity threats in higher institutions of Sokoto State?

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviation Assessing the Extent of Students' Perceptions of Insecurity Threats in Higher Institutions of Sokoto State.

S/N	Wages item statements	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
9	The security measures on my campus are adequate to prevent threats and ensure student safety.	20	15	167	190	1.66	0.78	Rejected
10	I have personally witnessed or experienced insecurity-related incidents (e.g., theft, harassment, violence) within my institution.	52	50	126	164	1.97	1.04	Rejected
11	Student hostels and off-campus accommodations are adequately protected from security threats such as theft, kidnapping, and violence.	119	165	69	39	2.93	0.93	Accepted
12	Concerns about insecurity on campus negatively affect my academic performance and concentration.	83	89	105	115	2.36	1.11	Rejected
13	The security personnel in my institution respond effectively to security threats and concerns raised by students.	88	94	108	102	2.43	1.1	Rejected
14	Insecurity on campus limits my participation in academic and extracurricular activities, especially during evening hours.	61	76	102	153	2.11	1.09	Rejected
15	The fear of insecurity discourages students from enrolling or continuing their studies in higher institutions within Sokoto State	20	45	144	183	1.75	0.85	Rejected
16	The government and school authorities are taking adequate steps to address security challenges affecting higher institutions in Sokoto State.	38	56	192	106	2.07	0.89	Rejected
	Grand Mean					**2.16**	**0.98**	**Low**

Source: *Research Survey, 2024*   **Criterion Mean** = *2.50*

Table 2 revealed that only one item (item 11) out of the eight descriptor statements assessing teacher wages have a mean score greater than criterion mean of 2.50 hence was accepted by the respondents while the other seven items (item 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16) have a mean score less than the criterion mean of 2.50 hence were rejected. However, the Grand Mean score = 2.16 for all the Mean ratings on students' perceptions of insecurity threats was less than the Criterion Mean of 2.50 (Grand Mean = 2.16 < Criterion Mean = 2.50) and also falls between the Grand Mean score = 1.61 – 2.20 which implies that there were poor students' perceptions of insecurity threats in higher institutions of Sokoto State.

Research Question 3: What is the level of insecurity threats in higher institutions of Sokoto State?

Table 14: Means and Standard Deviation Assessing the Extent of Level of Insecurity Threats in Higher Institutions of Sokoto State.

S/N	Professional Development item statements	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
17	The level of insecurity in my institution significantly affects my mental health and sense of safety.	39	61	148	144	1.99	0.96	Rejected
18	The presence of unauthorized or suspicious persons on campus is a common security concern.	13	72	170	137	1.90	0.81	Rejected
19	There have been reported cases of armed attacks or kidnappings involving students or staff in my institution.	37	48	148	159	1.91	0.95	Rejected
20	I often feel unsafe while moving around campus, especially at night.	112	138	55	87	2.70	1.11	Accepted
21	Students living in hostels (on-campus or off-campus) are frequently exposed to security threats such as break-ins, robbery, or violence.	47	63	134	148	2.02	1.01	Rejected
22	Security threats have led to disruptions in academic activities, such as class cancellations or temporary school closures.	48	78	134	132	2.11	1.01	Rejected
23	Cases of theft, harassment, or violence frequently occur within my institution.	96	199	71	26	2.93	0.83	Accepted
24	Security infrastructure such as CCTV, campus lighting, and perimeter fencing is insufficient in preventing insecurity threats.	33	47	121	191	1.80	0.95	Rejected
	Grand Mean					**2.17**	**0.95**	**Low**

Source: *Research Survey, 2024*   **Criterion Mean** = *2.50*

Table 3 revealed that two items (item 20 and 23) out of the eight descriptor statements assessing the level of insecurity threats in higher institutions have a mean score greater than criterion mean of 2.50 hence were accepted by the respondents while six items (item 17, 18, 19, 21, 22 and 24) have a mean score less than the criterion mean of 2.50 hence were rejected. However, the overall Grand Mean score = 2.17 for all the Mean ratings on the level of insecurity threats in higher institutions was less than the Criterion Mean of 2.50 (Grand Mean = 2.17 < Criterion Mean = 2.50) and also falls between Grand Mean score = 1.61 – 2.20 which implies that there was poor level of insecurity threats in higher institutions.

Discussion

Finding from table 1 showsthatthere were moderate lecturers' (staff) perceptions of insecurity threats in higher institutions of Sokoto State.Which means the scale of these security challenges appears to be lower compared toneighboring states. The findings of this study corroborate A study by Usman (2021) on insecurity in Northern Nigeria found that

while Sokoto has had cases of general insecurity, direct attacks on tertiary institutions remain minimal. The study attributes this to several factors, including the presence of security personnel, government interventions, and relatively stable social environment. However, the study aligns with Nwankwo (2023) on educational insecurity in Northern Nigeria, which found that Sokoto ranks among the least affected states concerning attacks on higher institutions. The study identified Borno, Yobe, Zamfara, and Kaduna as hotspots of insecurity due to frequent kidnappings and school abductions. Sokoto's relative security has enabled uninterrupted academic activities, further strengthening its reputation as a safer educational hub. Similarly, the finding is related to that of Bello and Ahmed (2023), who revealed that, there have been no recorded large-scale attacks on universities, polytechnics, or colleges of education in Sokoto State within the past decade. The study compared Sokoto to states like Borno, where institutions such as the University of Maiduguri have faced multiple security threats from insurgent groups.

Finding from table 2 indicated that, there were poor students' perceptions of insecurity threats in higher institutions of Sokoto State. The finding corroboratesBello et al. (2023) which indicated that students in Sokoto State's higher institutions generally perceive insecurity threats as minimal compared to other states in Northern Nigeria. students' perceptions are shaped by personal encounters, media reports, institutional security measures, and community influence. However, Musa and Abubakar (2023) revealed that Sokoto institutions are rarely featured in reports on campus insecurity, reinforcing students' belief that they are in a relatively secure environment.Consequently, students feel relatively safe, leading to a lower perception of insecurity threats. Similarly, Bello and Ahmed (2023), indicated that Sokoto's educational institutions benefit from strong community engagement, including local vigilante groups and traditional rulers who actively contribute to security efforts. This close-knit security network fosters a perception of safety among students.

Finding from table 3 indicated that there was poor level of insecurity threats in higher institutions in Sokoto state.The finding aligns with Nwankwo (2023) who revealed that students in Sokoto reported feeling safer on campus compared to their counterparts in states like Kaduna and Katsina. The study attributed this perception to the lack of direct security threats and the presence of functional security frameworks. Similarly, Ibrahim and Yusuf (2022), reported that Sokoto state have experienced some security challenges, these incidents have been largely concentrated in rural areas rather than in urban centers where most higher institutions are located. This geographical factor has contributed to the lower level of insecurity threats in Sokoto's educational institutions. However, Musa and Abubakar (2023) found that the relationship between Sokoto's educational institutions and local communities has been instrumental in preventing security threats. Traditional rulers, religious leaders, and local vigilante groups work closely with higher institutions to ensure that campuses remain safe from external threats. This level of community collaboration is less common in states experiencing higher insecurity levels.

Conclusion

The study indicates that the level of insecurity threats in higher institutions of Sokoto State is relatively low compared to other states in Northern Nigeria. Both lecturers and students perceive security challenges as minimal, which has contributed to the stability of academic activities in the region. While some security concerns exist, they have not significantly disrupted higher education in the state. Overall, the study underscores the importance of proactive security measures and community involvement in maintaining a stable learning environment. While Sokoto remains relatively secure, continuous efforts are necessary to sustain and enhance these security measures to prevent potential threats in the future.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Higher institutions in Sokoto State should continue to enhance their security frameworks by investing in surveillance systems, campus security personnel, and emergency response mechanisms. Regular security drills and awareness programs for staff and students can further improve preparedness against potential threats.

2. Higher institutions should establish formal partnerships withtraditional rulers, religious leaders, and local vigilante groups in maintaining security.

3. The government should maintain and strengthen its intervention strategies, including funding security initiatives in higher institutions and ensuring the presence of well-equipped security personnel on campuses. Additionally, policies that promote intelligence gathering and early threat detection should be reinforced to prevent potential security breaches.

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