



## Nexus of Security and Quality Higher Education in 21st-Century Nigeria: The Perspective of Stakeholders

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**Abstract:** This study investigates stakeholders' perspectives on the nexus between security and the quality of education in Northeast Nigeria and explores the effective strategies they perceive as promoting security in schools. The study adopted a phenomenographic research design. The study draws on the perceptions of 31 experienced stakeholders, comprising 10 student class representatives, 9 parents, 7 lecturers, and 5 administrators from tertiary institutions in Northeast Nigeria, where there have been security issues. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews. After data validation, I imported the data into MAXQDA, a software specifically designed to streamline the organization and management of data. I used selected participant quotes. The development of categories of description in this research was not predetermined but rather emerged spontaneously from the data. The findings reveal that disruption of learning, decrease in enrollment, teacher shortages, damage or destruction of educational infrastructure, and inadequate funding for education are among the significant impacts of insecurity. Furthermore, stakeholders identify community engagement, advocacy and awareness, use of technology, and deployment of security measures as effective strategies for enhancing security in schools to ensure quality education. If left unchecked, the negative consequences identified in this study could contribute to insecure learning environments that exacerbate harmful learning conditions and fuel mistrust to the detriment of the community's overall health. Without a stable and secure educational environment, it may be difficult to cultivate the skills and knowledge necessary for sustainable learning. Recommendations include stakeholder support for community engagement initiatives that maintain school security; collaborations among community members, local authorities, and schools; and shared accountability for the security of learning environments.

**Keywords:** nexus, security, quality, higher education, stakeholders' perceptions

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## **Nexus of Security and Quality Higher Education in 21st-Century Nigeria: The Perspective of Stakeholders**

Education is one of the most important aspects of human life, helping individuals think critically, solve problems, and make informed decisions that contribute to their personal and professional growth (Baker & Stevenson, 2018). Education also provides a platform for individuals to engage in constructive dialogue and work together towards common goals (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019). Therefore, even in twenty-first-century Nigeria, which is assailed by a myriad of intractable challenges, leaders recognize education as the pre-eminent instrument for progress and development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). In the very first section of the National Policy on Education, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2015) states:

Nigeria's philosophy of education is based on the following sets of beliefs:

1. Education is an instrument for national development and social change.
2. Education is vital for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria.
3. Education maximizes the creative potential and skills of individuals for self-fulfilment and the general development of society. (p. 13)

Quality education is an education system designed to provide learners with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary to succeed in life and contribute to the development of their communities and society as a whole (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2017). Quality education also ensures that all learners have the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values they need to thrive in their personal, social, and economic lives, enabling them to make positive contributions to society (UNESCO, 2021). As a result, a quality education can aid in reducing the cycle of poverty, increasing gender equality, and empowering individuals to live healthier, more sustainable lifestyles (UNESCO, 2015). Thus, quality education is important for building interpersonal tolerance and contributing to more peaceful and equitable societies.

Today, quality education in Nigeria is threatened by the legion of security challenges confronting the nation. *Cambridge Dictionary* defines *security* as the state of being free from danger or threat, or the safety of a state or organization against criminal activities such as terrorism, theft, or espionage (Cambridge University Press and Assessment, n.d). This definition highlights the importance of security in promoting the well-being and safety of individuals, communities, and nations, and the need to protect against a wide range of threats and risks. The nexus of security and quality education refers to the intersection between the two concepts, where ensuring the safety and security of students, faculty, and staff is seen as essential to providing a quality educational experience. In this context, to open a dialogue around the security issues that threaten quality education in Nigeria, this study explores the perspectives of educational stakeholders on the nexus of security and quality of education in Northeast Nigeria. By investigating these perspectives and exploring which strategies stakeholders perceive as effective in promoting security in Northeast Nigeria's higher education institutions, this study addresses a gap in the literature around security and quality education in Nigeria today. While some studies have explored Nigeria's contemporary security challenges and their impact on

education and national security, little is known about how educational stakeholders perceive the current context of quality education in Northern Nigeria.

This study focuses on the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, such as students, parents, lecturers, and administrators, giving a comprehensive view of how insecurity impacts quality education in Northeast Nigeria. Utilizing this multifaceted approach, this study contributes to the current research on education and security in Nigeria. This study specifically focuses on Northeast Nigeria, where insecurity caused by terrorism and insurgency has had a significant impact on educational institutions (Nathaniel & Pawa, 2025). By doing so, this study highlights important local differences that are sometimes ignored in larger research in the region. Further, this study not only describes the negative consequences of insecurity but also examines strategies for increasing security in educational environments in Northeast Nigeria, offering policymakers and educators insights into new ways of thinking about security and education in the region and in other comparable settings.

Additionally, this study focuses on higher education and how insecurity has impacted the quality of education at this level in Nigeria. The higher education institutions included in this study comprise universities and colleges of education and polytechnics in Northeast Nigeria. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are stakeholders' perceptions of the impact of insecurity on quality education in Northeast Nigeria?
2. What do stakeholders believe are the most effective strategies for promoting security in schools to ensure quality education in Northeast Nigeria?

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is underpinned by the Human Factor Theory (HFT) developed by Zwicky (1967), Norman (1988), and Reason (1990). The HFT is a scientific discipline that focuses on understanding human capabilities and limitations in the design of systems, products, and environments. This theory emerged from the need to improve safety, efficiency, and overall performance in various fields, particularly in healthcare, aviation, and education (Norman, 1988; Reason, 1990). Zwicky (1967), Norman (1988), and Reason (1990) have laid the groundwork for applying human factors principles across various domains, including higher education. The application of the HFT in higher education has significant implications, particularly concerning engagement, security, and overall educational experience.

Human factors emphasize the importance of individual engagement in educational institutions. The success of higher education institutions (HEIs) relies heavily on the human element—students, faculty, and staff. Effective engagement strategies must consider individuals' diverse backgrounds and needs within the institution (Mann et al., 2021). Understanding human factors can enhance safety protocols within educational environments. By designing systems that account for human behaviour, institutions can reduce risks associated with human error, thereby improving overall security. This is particularly relevant in contexts where students and staff interact with technology and physical environments. The dynamic nature of higher education requires institutions to be adaptable. The HFT supports the idea that systems should be designed to accommodate human variability, which can lead to more resilient educational environments (Norman, 1988). This adaptability is crucial in addressing insecurities that arise from rapid changes in technology and societal expectations (Russ et al., 2013). The theory also highlights the importance of cultural and social factors in education. By recognizing the diverse experiences of students, HEIs can create more inclusive environments that foster engagement and learning.

This inclusivity can mitigate feelings of insecurity among students from various backgrounds. As technology becomes increasingly integrated into education, understanding human factors is essential for effective implementation. Institutions must ensure that technological tools are user-friendly and enhance the learning experience rather than hinder it. This consideration can lead to improved educational outcomes and reduced frustration among users (Stone, 2008).

### **The Nigeria Context**

Nigeria, in recent times, has been bedevilled by a series of security problems. These insecurities come in many shapes and forms, including two that are discussed in this study: terrorism and insurgency, both of which are serious security threats in Nigeria. *Terrorism* is the pursuit of political or social objectives with violence and the threat of violence. An *insurgency*, on the other hand, is an uprising or an armed rebellion. Nigeria has been in the firm grip of both terrorism and insurgency since 2010, when Boko Haram announced its arrival on the world stage with a series of coordinated attacks on churches, schools, and public facilities and infrastructures in Abuja and across Northern Nigeria (Human Rights Watch, 2012).

Boko Haram lived up to the meaning of its name by telling the world that Western education is an abomination (United States Congress, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, 2011). The Chibok affair and several other similar abductions crippled education in Northeast Nigeria. As a result, schools remain closed in large parts of Borno State despite the recent setbacks suffered by the terrorist organisation. It is estimated that the damage Boko Haram has inflicted on the nation will remain indelible for the next several generations.

These security challenges have conspicuously and devastatingly impacted education in Nigeria. The high level of out-of-school children in Northeastern Nigeria is the consequence of the perilous security situation in that region. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2019), one out of every five out-of-school children in the world lives in Nigeria, and 85% of those children are in northern Nigeria. In the north, the net school attendance rate is 53% (UNICEF, 2019). The female net attendance rate is upward of 47.7%, meaning more than half of female students in northern Nigeria are not in school (UNICEF, 2019). In the three insurgency-endemic states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa, at least 802 schools remain closed, 497 classrooms have been destroyed, and another 1,392 are damaged and irreparable (Joshua et al., 2016).

### **Higher Education in Nigeria**

Higher education is critical to the development of skilled human labour, which is required for economic progress and societal advancement. Higher education is significant in Nigeria because of its capacity to improve employability, encourage innovation, and contribute to national development (Iyejare, 2023; Jaja, 2013). Despite these benefits, the country has problems in terms of enrollment rates, graduation results, and graduate employment (World Education Services & World Education News & Reviews, 2024).

Empirical research has repeatedly proven that higher education promotes economic growth by providing individuals with the required skills to effectively engage in the labour market (Jaja, 2013). Skilled labour is an important driver of productivity and innovation, both of which are necessary for economic competitiveness (Iyejare, 2023; Nigeria Foundation, n.d.).

Furthermore, higher education institutions act as research and development hubs, helping to enhance technology and society.

In Nigeria, higher education enrollment has seen a gradual increase over the years (National University Commission, 2019). Factors such as socio-economic barriers, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to quality education hinder many potential students from pursuing higher education (Alda, n.d.; National University Commission, 2019). Graduation rates are also a concern, with many students facing challenges that lead to prolonged study periods or dropping out.

The employability of graduates from Nigerian higher education institutions is frequently questioned. Many companies report a skills gap, indicating that graduates are not well-equipped for employment (Aselebe, 2022). This divergence between education and employment emphasises the necessity for curriculum revisions and collaborations between educational institutions and companies to guarantee that graduates have the skills needed in the job market (Alda, n.d.; Aselebe, 2022). To solve these difficulties, major efforts must be made to enhance Nigeria's higher education industry. This involves boosting educational institution financing, improving infrastructure, and implementing regulations that encourage higher education access and equity (Iyejare, 2023). Unfortunately, the infrastructure in place is undermined by insecurity in our schools. Furthermore, encouraging collaboration between academics and industry might assist in aligning educational achievements with labour market demands, hence boosting graduates' employability (Alda, n.d.).

### **Insecurity and Higher Education in Nigeria**

According to Ogunode and colleagues (2023), insecurity has hurt community service, research, and teaching in Nigerian universities. The authors observed a decrease in funding for higher education, which resulted in staff and student deaths as well as the demolition of facilities. To guarantee a secure atmosphere for instruction and learning, they suggested that the government deal with the problems that contribute to insecurity and make investments in security measures throughout higher education. A World Bank (2016) study looked at how the Boko Haram crisis affected schooling in Northeast Nigeria. The authors claimed that violent events like bombings and kidnappings caused a steep decline in educational performance in the northeast, the closure of many schools, and the relocation of both teachers and students. In their discussion of Northeast Nigeria's growing insecurity, Onuoha and Oyewole (2021) pointed out how banditry has changed into terrorist-like activities. The writers pointed out that socioeconomic activities, including schooling, have been interrupted by the region's vulnerability to violent assaults. To protect educational institutions and other vital sectors, they demanded a comprehensive response that addresses the root causes of insecurity.

Research by Nte and colleagues (2023) examined the obstacles and potential for using information and communication technology (ICT) in Nigerian counter-terrorism activities. The authors observed that violent organisations such as Boko Haram and ISWAP have used ICT for recruiting and propaganda, posing a threat to national security. They stressed the necessity for Nigeria's government to use ICT in counter-terrorism efforts to improve security and safeguard sectors such as education from terrorist threats. Likewise, Oluranti (2024) investigated the effects of banditry and terrorism on occupational health in Nigeria. The authors stated that instability has resulted in economic issues, poverty, and unemployment, all of which have an indirect impact on different areas, including education. They advocated comprehensive solutions to reduce insecurity, promote occupational health, and foster an environment favourable to

educational activities. Further, a study by Ike and colleagues (2024) investigated the role of private military and security firms (PMSCs) in Nigeria's counterterrorism activities. The authors discovered that, while PMSCs have been used to reduce insecurity, there is a lack of studies on residents' assessments of their usefulness. They emphasized the importance of establishing regulatory frameworks to manage PMSC activities to guarantee that they contribute positively to national security and educational institutions. Omodero (2024) researched the societal elements that contribute to insecurity in Nigeria. According to the author, underdevelopment, poverty, and unemployment all contribute significantly to the spread of terrorism and other types of insecurity.

The studies reviewed show that insecurity in Nigeria cuts across a host of sectors, with education bearing the brunt. Nte and colleagues (2023) underscore the role of ICT in both enabling activities and supporting counter-terrorism efforts. Oluranti (2024) ties insecurity to poverty and the resulting poor learning conditions. Ike and colleagues (2024) argue for the regulation of security firms, and Omodero (2024) points to poverty and underdevelopment as the deep-rooted drivers of insecurity. Taken as a whole, these studies make clear that boosting both security and education in Nigeria hinges on a mix of cutting-edge technology, effective regulation, and broad socioeconomic reforms.

### **Method**

I adopted a phenomenographic research approach for this study. This is a qualitative research approach situated within the interpretivist and descriptive paradigms, originating from investigations into how students learn within the university context (Marton, 1994, p. 4425). This methodology enabled me to gain a deep understanding of the participants' experiences of insecurity and quality higher education (Marton, 1997). Phenomenography also provides a useful tool for mapping the variations in how a group collectively experiences a phenomenon (Okoli, 2019).

### **Participants and Data Collection**

To represent information-rich instances in qualitative research, a sampling procedure with acceptable criteria for selecting participants is necessary (Patton, 2002). Consequently, I explored the perceptions of 31 stakeholders, comprising 10 student class representatives, 9 parents, 7 lecturers, and 5 administrators from five tertiary (i.e., higher education) institutions located in four states in Northeast Nigeria. The states involved were: Adamawa, Borno, Bauchi, and Gombe. Two tertiary institutions were chosen from Bauchi State, which has nine tertiary institutions. One institution was selected from each of Adamawa, Borno, and Gombe States, as each has seven tertiary institutions. Selected institutions were: Adamawa: Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola; Borno: Kashim Ibrahim College of Education, Maiduguri; Bauchi: Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi, and Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi; and Gombe: Federal College of Education, Gombe. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews with stakeholders from the selected institutions in Northeast Nigeria. All interviews were conducted face-to-face except four, which were conducted via WhatsApp because these participants were not accessible to me. The interviews lasted 45 minutes. The interviews were done in English because the interviewees' mother tongues differed; however, all the participants were fluent in English. I received Institutional Review Board approval. The interviews were audiotaped with the permission of the participants.

**Table 1***Profile of Participants: Stakeholders in Education*

<b>Participants (Stakeholders)</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Institution type</b>	<b>Status/Rank</b>	<b>Experience (yrs)</b>
ST 1	M	Parent	-	Businessman	25
ST 2	M	Student	University	Postgraduate	*
ST 3	M	Lecturer	Polytechnic	Senior lecturer	9
ST 4	M	Student	Polytechnic	HND	*
ST 5	F	Parent	-	Businesswoman	31
ST 6	M	Lecturer	University	Professor	33
ST 7	F	Student	College of Education	NCE	*
ST 8	M	Lecturer	University	Assoc. Professor	12
ST 9	M	Administrator	Polytechnic	Deputy Registrar	27
ST 10	F	Parent	-	Civil servant	29
ST 11	M	Administrator	University	Deputy Registrar	26
ST 12	F	Lecturer	Polytechnic	Chief lecturer	30
ST 13	M	Administrator	University	Principal Asst. Registrar	28
ST 14	M	Student	College of Education	NCE	*
ST 15	M	Lecturer	University	Senior lecturer	11
ST 16	M	Student	College of Education	NCE	*
ST 17	M	Parent	-	Civil servant	25
ST 18	M	Administrator	College of Education	Registrar	31
ST 19	F	Student	Polytechnic	ND	*
ST 20	F	Parent	-	Farmer	44
ST 21	F	Lecturer	University	Professor	28
ST 22	M	Parent	-	Retired civil servant	*
ST 23	M	Student	University	Undergraduate	*
ST 24	M	Parent	-	Businessman	23
ST 25	M	Student	College of Education	NCE	*
ST 26	F	Student	University	Undergraduate	*
ST 27	F	Parent	-	Civil servant	32
ST 28	M	Lecturer	College of Education	Principal lecturer	26
ST 29	F	Parent	-	Civil servant	25
ST 30	M	Student	Polytechnic	HND	*

Participants (Stakeholders)	Gender	Status	Institution type	Status/Rank	Experience (yrs)
ST 31	F	Administrator	University	Asst. Registrar	24

Note: ST = Stakeholder. Participants without years of experience who are students are marked with an asterisk.

## Data Analysis

In phenomenographic research, data analysis is an iterative and interpretive process that involves repeatedly reading the interview transcripts to identify and cluster the key elements of participants' experiences into categories of description (Åkerlind, 2005b). According to Cope (2004), this process "enables each statement to be understood from the participant's own viewpoint" (p. 6). I adopted Stoodley's (2009) approach by using selected participant quotes and ensuring the research was validated through communicative checks (p. 71). I also drew from Marton and Pang (2008) for my data analysis and development of categories of description. Consequently, the categories I identified in this research were not predetermined but rather emerged from deep engagement with the data.

I listened to the audiotaped interviews repeatedly before transcribing them word-for-word (Stamouli & Huggard, 2007, p. 184). With the transcripts in hand, an iterative cycle began; I read through each transcript several times, correcting typographic inconsistencies along the way. Once the text was cleaned, I imported the transcripts into MAXQDA (VERBI Software, 2025), a software designed to streamline the organization and management of qualitative data (Richards, 2005). Through my analysis process, I aimed to understand the perceptions of stakeholders, based on my two research questions: (1) What are stakeholders' perceptions of the impact of insecurity on quality education in Northeast Nigeria? (2) What do stakeholders believe are the most effective strategies for promoting security in schools to ensure quality education in Northeast Nigeria?

## Findings

### The Impact of Insecurity on Quality Education in Northeast Nigeria

To answer research question number one, participants' perceptions were divided into five themes: disruption of learning, decrease in enrollment, teacher shortages, damage or destruction of educational infrastructure, and inadequate funding for higher education. I used the abbreviation ST for stakeholder, combined with a unique serial number when referring to a particular stakeholder's quote. Participant quotes are used to illustrate the nature of each theme. Table 2 shows the number of stakeholders who mentioned each theme on the impact of insecurity on the provision of quality education.

**Table 2***Stakeholder-Identified Themes Concerning Impact of Insecurity on Quality Education*

<b>Participants (Stakeholders)</b>	<b>Disruption of Learning</b>	<b>Decrease in Enrollment</b>	<b>Teacher shortages</b>	<b>Damage or destruction of educational infrastructure</b>	<b>Inadequate funding for education</b>
ST 1	X	X	X	X	X
ST 2	X	X	X		X
ST 3		X	X		X
ST 4		X	X		X
ST 5		X		X	X
ST 6	X	X	X	X	X
ST 7		X	X	X	X
ST 8		X	X	X	
ST 9		X	X	X	
ST 10		X	X	X	
ST 11	X	X	X	X	
ST 12	X	X	X	X	
ST 13	X	X	X	X	X
ST 14	X	X	X		X
ST 15	X				X
ST 16		X			X
ST 17	X	X			X
ST 18	X	X	X		X
ST 19	X	X	X		
ST 20	X	X	X	X	
ST 21		X	X	X	
ST 22	X	X		X	
ST 23			X	X	
ST 24	X	X	X		X
ST 25		X			X
ST 26	X	X	X		X
ST 27	X	X			X
ST 28	X	X	X		
ST 29	X	X	X		
ST 30	X	X			
ST 31	X		X		
<b>Total number</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>17</b>

Note: ST = stakeholder.

***Disruption of Learning***

The first theme, disruption of learning, included 20 stakeholders who perceived that when a person feels insecure, they may lack confidence in their learning abilities. This can make

it difficult for a person to believe that they can successfully learn and understand new concepts. As a result, they may be less likely to engage in the learning process, which can lead to disruptions. For example, one stakeholder described disruption of learning in this way: “Insecurity causes a person to be distracted by their thoughts and concerns” (ST 11). Another stakeholder said, “Insecurity has created fear in students, which makes it difficult for students to concentrate” (ST 27). This fear, of course, can result in a reluctance to participate in class activities, ask questions, or engage in discussions, which can ultimately disrupt the learning process. ST 2 stated, “Insecurity makes students feel unmotivated to learn, which has caused a lack of interest in learning among students in the Northeast Nigeria.” Trauma and psychological distress are ways in which insecurity disrupts learning among learners. This is directly from the statement of one stakeholder who said, “Insecurity has caused a traumatic experience for students, especially those who witness violence, loss of life, and destruction of their homes and communities in the northeast region of Nigeria.” This psychological distress includes depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which has impaired students' ability to concentrate. This perception represented the impact of insecurity on the disruption of learning that educators need to understand to know what to do next.

### ***Decrease in Enrollment***

The second theme, a decrease in enrollment, included 28 stakeholders who perceived school closure as one way that insecurity leads to a decrease in enrollment. For example, one stakeholder stated, “Insurgency has caused too many closures of tertiary institutions in the Northeast Nigeria. This prevents students from attending school, and sometimes they do not want to go to school again, leading to a decline in enrollment” (ST 19). Fear of terrorists is responsible for the decrease in enrollment. ST 3 said, “We are afraid to send our children to school. We do not want our children to die.” Insecurity has created an environment of fear in Northeast Nigeria, making parents hesitant to send their children to school. The parents are concerned about their children's safety, leading to lower enrollment rates.

Participants mentioned displacement as a reason behind the decrease in enrollment, caused by insurgency in Northeast Nigeria. For example, one stakeholder said, “Insecurity has caused a lot of families and communities to be displaced in this Northeast. We are living in the Internally Displaced People’s Camp (IDPC). We do not have a university and polytechnic here” (ST 10). Higher education is seriously disrupted in the northeast because students have no access to higher education in their new location.

Poverty was cited as a factor responsible for the decreased enrollment of students in higher education in the northeast. In line with this, one stakeholder, ST 14, said, “Insecurity has resulted in economic hardship and poverty for us, which has made it difficult for us to afford the cost of higher education.” This has led to a decline in enrollment rates of higher education students in the northeast of Nigeria.

### ***Teacher shortages***

The third theme, teacher shortages, indicates that another impact of insecurity on quality higher education is a shortage of teachers. Twenty-three stakeholders perceived teacher shortages as one of the impacts of insecurity on the quality of higher education. According to their responses, insecurity in the northeast has displaced teachers from their homes and communities, making it difficult or impossible for them to continue their jobs. Teachers are also human beings.

Teachers have become refugees or internally displaced people and have had to flee to safer areas, leaving behind the schools. The following examples from the statements of stakeholders show that insecurity has impacted the teachers negatively: “For us, teachers are also the same thing as students when it comes to the issue of insecurity. Anything that affects students affects teachers too” (ST 18), and “These insurgent groups are kidnapping teachers and as such the teachers are running away for safety” (ST 31).

### ***Damage or destruction of educational infrastructure***

The fourth theme is damage or destruction of educational infrastructure. In the interviews, 14 stakeholders considered the different ways in which insecurity has impacted the quality of higher education through damaged educational infrastructure. The first view of infrastructural destruction included direct attacks on schools by the insurgents. In this view, the stakeholders said that insurgent groups have directly attacked schools in Northeast Nigeria, damaging or destroying buildings, equipment, and other resources. One stakeholder stated the following regarding direct attacks by insurgent groups: “Attacks are carried out with explosives, arson, or gunfire, and result in destruction of the facilities” (ST 6). The second view of infrastructural destruction included the use of indirect attacks to destroy schools. According to this view, the insurgents attack things that are related to the schools. For example, one stakeholder explained the indirect way of destroying schools in the northeast: “Insurgency also causes indirect damage to educational infrastructure in a way of blocking and damaging roads and other transportation networks, making it difficult for students and teachers to reach schools” (ST 20).

### ***Inadequate funding for higher education***

The fifth theme, inadequate funding for higher education, was cited by 17 stakeholders. For example, one stakeholder noted that “insurgency has resulted in reduced government funding for higher education as resources are diverted towards the military or other security operations” (ST 2). This situation has left schools inadequate in vital resources, resulting in poor quality higher education and reduced learning outcomes for students. Poverty is the result of insecurity in the northeast of Nigeria as well. Another stakeholder emphasized that insecurity has resulted in economic hardship: “Insurgency results in economic hardship and instability, leading to reduced government revenues and decreased funding for higher education. The government is spending a lot to prosecute the war against insurgency and its effects, such as relief efforts and other priorities, leaving higher education underfunded” (ST 7).

### **Effective Strategies for Promoting Security in Schools to Ensure Quality Education**

To answer research question number two (What perceptions do stakeholders hold regarding the most effective strategies for promoting security in schools to ensure quality education in Northeast Nigeria?), participants’ perceptions were divided into four themes: community engagement, advocacy and awareness, use of technology, and deployment of security personnel. The number of stakeholders who mentioned each theme for the effective strategies for promoting security in schools to ensure quality higher education is specified in Table 3.

**Table 3***Stakeholder-Identified Themes Concerning Promoting School Security for Quality Education*

<b>Participants (Stakeholders)</b>	<b>Community Engagement</b>	<b>Advocacy and Awareness</b>	<b>Use of Technology</b>	<b>Deployment of Security</b>
ST 1	X		X	X
ST 2	X		X	
ST 3		X		
ST 4				
ST 5		X		X
ST 6	X	X	X	X
ST 7		X	X	
ST 8		X	X	X
ST 9				
ST 10				X
ST 11	X			X
ST 12	X	X	X	
ST 13			X	X
ST 14	X	X	X	
ST 15	X			
ST 16				
ST 17		X		
ST 18	X		X	
ST 19	X	X	X	
ST 20	X	X	X	X
ST 21			X	
ST 22	X	X		
ST 23				X
ST 24	X	X	X	
ST 25				
ST 26		X	X	
ST 27	X	X		
ST 28	X	X	X	
ST 29		X		
ST 30		X		
ST 31	X		X	
Total number	15	17	16	9

Note: ST = stakeholder.

***Community Engagement***

The first theme, community engagement, included 15 participants who considered community engagement as an effective strategy to ensure security in schools, providing for quality higher education. For example, one participant reported the importance of community engagement as follows: “People should be involved in the security of schools because the

terrorists are from these communities; people know them” (ST 19). Thus, the stakeholders believed that involving the people of the area to curb security challenges affecting schools is an effective strategy.

### ***Advocacy and awareness***

The second theme, advocacy and awareness, holds that raising awareness about security in schools is often a crucial step in combating the impact of insurgency in schools in Northeast Nigeria. This strategy can be accomplished by sharing information on social media or simply speaking out publicly about security challenges affecting the quality of higher education. For example, one participant stated that “the community should be informed of what is going on, this can be done by public higher education campaigns, town criers, social media posts, or community events” (ST 12). Another participant said that “making people aware of the security challenges affecting schools can help to bring their attention to the issue” (ST 22). The core causes of insurgency, such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, and political marginalisation, can be identified by communities with the support of awareness programs. Advocacy and awareness can encourage neighbourhood involvement in efforts to address the root causes of insurgency, such as fostering economic growth, ensuring political equality, and enhancing security. Communities become more invested in avoiding insurgency and are better equipped to recognize and report suspicious actions when they are involved in these efforts.

### ***Use of Technology***

The third strategy, use of technology, highlights technology as an action that can combat security challenges in schools and includes 16 stakeholders. For example, a participant stated the importance of the use of technology: “Technology can see anything going anywhere in the world” (ST 7). In this regard, technology, such as drones, satellites, and other surveillance technologies, can be used to monitor insurgent movements, track supply chains, and identify areas of conflict. One participant also underscored the importance of technology by saying that “technology is important in the aspect of communication; soldiers can easily communicate with each other to share information and coordinate actions effectively” (ST 28).

It is also vital to recognize the limitations of technological security surveillance in schools. Technological security surveillance systems require energy and internet connectivity, which may be unavailable during an emergency. Surveillance can intrude on privacy, raising ethical concerns among students and professors. Cameras and monitoring systems may fail due to technological flaws, causing security gaps. However, the use of backup power sources, such as generators, to ensure that systems can function offline or have local storage capabilities; clear communication of surveillance policies, ensuring transparency about how footage is used and who has access to it; and the implementation of privacy-preserving measures while maintaining safety could help mitigate against these limitations.

### ***Deployment of Security***

The last theme or strategy for promoting security in schools to ensure quality higher education is the deployment of security. Deployment of security personnel in schools in Northeast Nigeria was highlighted by 9 stakeholders. ST 1 stated that “putting security personnel in the schools would provide confidence for the teachers and the learners.” In addition, two

participants said, “In faculties, the presence of security personnel serves as an effective deterrent to criminals, dissuading them from carrying out unauthorised and illegal activities” (ST 10 & ST 11). One of the participants pointed out that “the presence of security personnel contributes to the overall preparedness of the school for any emergencies” (ST 21). One of the participants also said that “the fast intervention of trained security personnel is important in addressing security incidents right away and successfully, their quick reactions can lessen the impact of emergencies together with violence, intruders, or other threats which might disrupt the quality of higher education” (ST 23).

### **Discussion**

Through this research, my goal was to better understand stakeholders’ perceptions about the impacts of insecurity on the quality of higher education in Nigeria, and to explore the perceptions stakeholders hold regarding the most effective strategies to address those challenges. This study highlights several negative consequences of insecurity on education. The themes of disruption of learning, decrease in enrollment, and teacher shortages mirror those seen in the literature and the ongoing debate regarding how insecurity has affected education in Northeast Nigeria (e.g., Nte et al., 2023; Ogunode et al., 2023). Stakeholders’ recognition of the impact of insecurity on education in terms of disruption of learning, damage or destruction of educational infrastructure, and inadequate funding for education reflects some of the perceptions held consistently by scholars who have researched in the field (Kolade, 2016; UNESCO, 2023). However, this study found, in addition to what is seen in the literature, that a decrease in enrollment and teacher shortages are also part of the negative impact of insecurity on the quality of education.

Insecurity contributes to the disruption of the learning surroundings, leading to common school closures and interruptions. Students' capacity to access regular and satisfactory education is severely compromised, impacting their instruction (Smith, 2018). Expressed as a significant concern, scholars emphasized the global learning crisis, as acknowledged by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, stating that it impacts prosperity, the planet, peace, and people (Aselebe, 2022). A lack of confidence often discourages parents from sending their children to high school in Nigeria, resulting in a decrease in students’ enrollment (Fayemi, 2018). Insecurity regularly leads to the displacement of teachers, resulting in educational workforce shortages. This, in turn, negatively impacts the instructor-student ratio (World Bank, 2019). Lack of security resulting in assaults on classrooms, libraries, and laboratories can cause damage to and destruction of instructional infrastructure, hindering the delivery of quality education (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Additionally, insecurity can result in a diversion of resources from learning to safety features, resulting in inadequate investment in educational equipment or facilities. This diversion of educational funds further impedes efforts to maintain or enhance quality schooling (Save the Children, 2017).

Stakeholders who participated in this study recognized numerous strategies to provide effective security measures in schools. For example, active involvement of the local community was viewed as crucial for boosting faculty safety. Communities can play a role in monitoring and reporting protection threats (National Association of School Psychologists, n.d.). Stakeholders also emphasized the significance of advocacy and awareness campaigns to bring awareness to the general public about the consequences of insecurity on quality education. These campaigns

aim to garner support for safety features and promote a collective effort to guard facilities (UNICEF, 2022).

The incorporation of new technology, particularly surveillance systems and communication equipment, was also highlighted by stakeholders as an important technique for improving campus safety and security. This finding is consistent with Schaeffer's (2022) research, which found significant deployment of technology and communication systems associated with security measures in public schools during the 2019-2020 academic year.

In this study, a majority of respondents (91%) revealed that their institutions were monitored by security cameras, and 83% of respondents said that all staff members had access to two-way radios. These tools are critical for enabling real-time communication and effective monitoring, especially during an emergency. Stakeholders included in the study also stressed the need to employ qualified security staff in addition to implementing complete safety standards. This dual strategy is critical for developing secure facilities that prevent possible attacks while also ensuring the safety of students and staff. According to Schaeffer (2022), around 64% of schools in the United States formed a danger assessment team during the 2019-2020 academic year. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2022), threat assessment is "a formalized process of identifying, assessing, and managing students who may pose a threat of targeted violence in schools" (p.3). Typically, these teams include administrators and school psychologists, who play an important role in assessing possible dangers and establishing effective response techniques. This finding is supported by the National Association of School Psychologists (n.d.), which found that over 70% of children aged 12-18 in the United States reported the presence of security guards or police officers in their schools. Furthermore, 83% confirmed the use of security cameras in schools in the United States, with more than 12% mentioning the presence of metal detectors. These figures highlight the growing emphasis on security measures in educational institutions, demonstrating a proactive commitment to protecting students and staff.

Furthermore, the integration of technology and the formation of danger assessment teams are more than just reactive measures; they help build a culture of safety in educational settings. As noted by recent scholarship, these approaches help to create a safer learning environment, thus improving the educational experience (e.g., Iyejare, 2023; Ojewale, 2021; Omodero, 2024; Ukozor & Ayoko, 2023). Prioritizing safety and security allows educational institutions to develop learning environments in which students feel comfortable and supported.

### **Conclusion**

This study shows how closely security and quality education are tied together in Northeast Nigeria. Participants shared how insecurity disrupts learning, reduces enrollment, causes teacher shortages, and destroys school buildings. If nothing is done, these challenges may continue to create fear, weaken trust, and lower the quality of education in Northeast Nigeria. The study also highlights that without safety, it is hard for students to learn and for communities to grow. However, the voices of stakeholders offer hope through community involvement, awareness campaigns, technology, and better security support, which they believe will help schools become safer and more nurturing places. By addressing insecurity, we can build stronger learning environments and a brighter future for education in the region.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested for schools in Nigeria:

1. Educational stakeholders in Nigeria should support community engagement initiatives that include nearby communities in maintaining school security. Encourage collaborations between community members, local authorities, and schools to instil a feeling of shared accountability for the security of learning environments. This might involve neighbourhood watch initiatives, neighbourhood patrols, and group initiatives to deal with the underlying reasons for insecurity.
2. To raise public awareness of the value of education and the detrimental effects of insecurity on educational standards, educational stakeholders in Nigeria should launch advocacy and awareness campaigns. Raising awareness of the need for a safe learning environment may entail forming alliances with local press, civic leaders, and non-governmental organizations, providing information to interested parties on how to report questionable activity, and stressing the need for quality education for community development.
3. To improve school security in Nigeria, all tiers of government should leverage technology to monitor and safeguard educational institutions. This involves installing security cameras, access-control systems, and other technical solutions. Establish mechanisms for schools and security authorities to share information and communicate in real-time. Additionally, school personnel should receive training on how to use technology for security in an efficient manner.

This study demonstrates the extent to which insecurity affects students and educators in Northeast Nigeria, disrupting learning processes and eroding confidence in the educational system. Nevertheless, stakeholders' perspectives indicated that with strengthened community engagement and coordinated security interventions, higher education in the region has the potential to regain stability and foster a more supportive and resilient learning atmosphere.

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