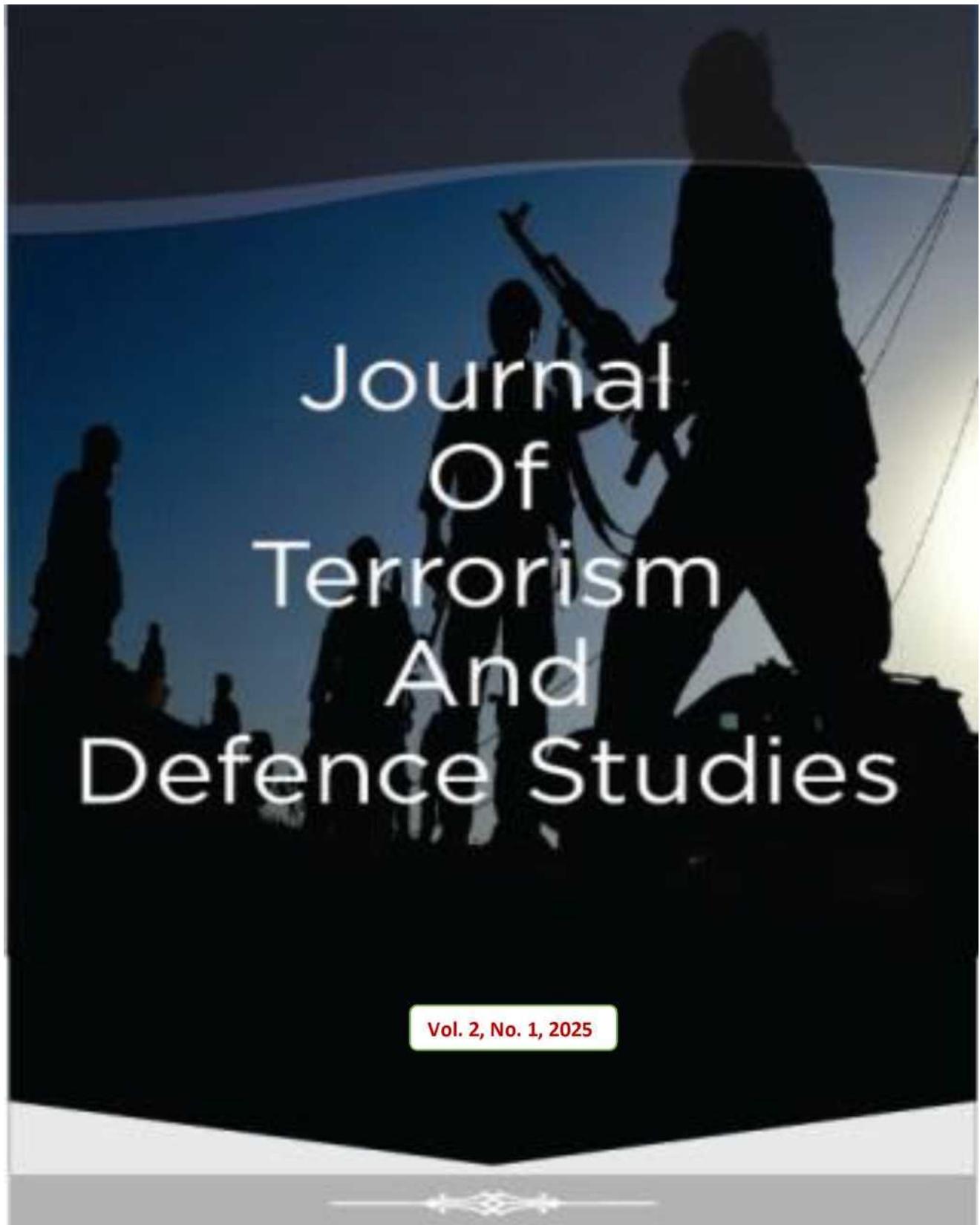




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EDITORIAL NOTE

This special issue started with a wholistic review of the different dynamics of insecurity and defence threats within the African states.

The first article presented the challenges of kidnapping, terrorism and police brutality in Nigeria. It reveals that the Nigerian state has been weighed down by the multiple threats of progressive terrorism often carried out through mass abduction of villagers, groups and targeted travelers. Unfortunately, the hope of the victims for rescue is often worsened by the increasing culture of police brutality, which turns the expected saviors into part of the popular source of terror.

The second article presents military coups as a major threat in West Africa. In contemporary times, West African states have become a centerpiece of continuous coups and failed coups. This wind of coups in West Africa is largely driven by the culture of corruption, nepotism and bad governance which creates ungoverned spaces for insecurity and a beautiful environment for coup plotters to launch their attacks and win public opinion. The article that followed unraveled the negative wind of human trafficking and the negative psychology as well as false hope that drives victims into the untold hardship. The situation is worsened by the crisis of untold hardship that goes with reintegration.

Furthermore, the next article presented the crisis faced in the Contemporary Zimbabwean state. These crisis were driven by a combination of neocolonialism, bad governance, land crisis and poor fiscal policy which weakened national spirit of development and undermined nation building process in Zimbabwe. The last article evaluated the culture of military rule. It unveils the multiple corruption, nepotism, ethnicity and human rights violations within the Nigerian state under military rule. The implications became that the Nigerian state was high jacked and pushed away from the part of democratization towards the part of militarism in the post-independence years of the state.

Finally, I wish to invite you to take your time and read through the wonderful contents of the articles. They are highly scholarly and have sound promise of satisfying your intellectual appetite.

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TABLE OF CONTENT:

Understanding Insecurity Issues in Nigeria: A Qualitative Study on Kidnapping, Terrorism, and Police Brutality.

Akinwale, Gbenusola. A. & Edun, Olabamiji S.

4

Military Coups and Governance Crises in West African States

Kelechi Johnmary Ani & Olawale Yemisi

20

Understanding Human Trafficking As a Global Crisis and Its Devastating Impact on Victims' Identity, Psychological Well-Being, and Socioeconomic Reintegration

Chukwuma, Uchechi Friday & Akinwale, Gbenusola Abike & Idoko, Roseline Ihotu

31

Political Volatility, Financial and Development Issues in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe, 1980-2008

Kelechi Collins Okoro & Oluchukwu Nnenna Orizu

44

The Legacy of Military Rule in Nigeria: Militarized Governance, Democratic Deficits, and Implications For National Security

Vincent Okwudiba Anyika & Kelechi Johnmary Ani

55

Corruption And The Nigerian State, 1960-2007: A Theoretical Overview

Meshach Ofuafor

71

UNDERSTANDING INSECURITY ISSUES IN NIGERIA: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON KIDNAPPING, TERRORISM, AND POLICE BRUTALITY.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the psychological impacts of insecurity in Nigeria, with particular focus on kidnapping, terrorism, and police brutality, using Lagos State as a case study. Insecurity has become a persistent social challenge, exposing citizens to repeated trauma and fear. The study adopted a qualitative research design to gain in-depth understanding of how insecurity affects victims' mental and emotional wellbeing. In-depth interviews were conducted with five survivors of insecurity-related incidents to explore their lived experiences, psychological trauma, coping mechanisms, and perceptions of institutional support. Findings reveal profound psychological consequences, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), chronic anxiety, fear, and emotional withdrawal. The study also highlights significant gaps in access to mental health and psychosocial services. Furthermore, survivors expressed deep distrust in security agencies and government institutions due to perceived inefficiency and abuse. The study underscores the urgent need for comprehensive security reforms, improved mental health interventions, and community-based psychosocial support systems to restore trust, promote healing, and strengthen societal resilience.

Keywords: *Insecurity, Kidnapping, Terrorism, Police Brutality, Psychological Impacts*

Introduction

Insecurity, in the form of kidnapping, terrorism, and police brutality, has become a defining issue of the 21st century, with significant implications for psychological well-being. Globally, the incidence of terrorism has risen in regions such as the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia, contributing to widespread trauma, forced displacement, and chronic fear among affected populations (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023). Similarly, the rise of state-sanctioned violence, including excessive policing practices and human rights violations, has sparked protests from the

United States to Latin America, underscoring the ubiquity of institutional abuse and its psychological toll (Amnesty International, 2022).

In Africa, Nigeria has represented a poignant case study within this global pattern. In the past decade, the country has experienced an escalation of multifaceted insecurity crises, ranging from Boko Haram terrorism in the northeast to mass kidnappings by armed bandit groups in the northwest and widespread police brutality nationwide (Afolabi et al., 2022). Reports suggest that more than 3,000 individuals were abducted across Nigeria in 2021 alone, reflecting a staggering rise in

criminal violence (Council on Foreign Relations, 2022). Alongside these non-state threats, police brutality has persisted as a systemic issue. The notorious Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), initially established to combat violent crime, became synonymous with extrajudicial killings, extortion, and harassment. This culminated in the 2020 #EndSARS protests, where thousands of Nigerians, especially young people, mobilized against structural violence and demanded accountability (Abimabad et al., 2022).

Despite the eventual disbandment of SARS, reports of brutality by successor units persist, deepening distrust between citizens and state authorities (Al Jazeera, 2022). Kidnapping has become a lucrative criminal enterprise, often targeting students, travellers, and community members. High-profile cases, such as the Greenfield University abduction in 2021, where dozens of students were kidnapped and several killed, demonstrate both the vulnerability of civilians and the psychological devastation inflicted on survivors and their families (Adesina, 2022). Beyond the immediate trauma of captivity, survivors often suffer long-term consequences such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and fear of reintegration (Ayinde & Ayegun, 2018).

Similarly, terrorism by Boko Haram and its splinter group, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), has displaced millions, destroyed communities, and left behind a generation of youth exposed to war-related trauma. Studies show that children and adolescents in conflict-prone northeastern Nigeria report heightened rates of PTSD, anxiety, and impaired cognitive functioning compared to peers in more stable regions (Olugbenga-Bello et al., 2024).

In Nigeria, these conditions are exacerbated by weak health systems, cultural stigmatization of mental illness, and inadequate access to psychological services (Eneanya et al., 2022). Survivors often report recurrent nightmares, hypervigilance, difficulty concentrating, and social

withdrawal, which hinder daily functioning and long-term recovery (Nwamini et al., 2024).

Beyond individual experiences, insecurity erodes collective well-being. Community trust is undermined when citizens lose faith in state institutions. At the same time, repeated exposure to mass violence fosters a culture of fear and vigilantism (Adamu & Afolabi, 2023). Insecurity also disrupts education, economic productivity, and social cohesion, creating a cycle in which trauma not only affects individuals but also destabilizes entire communities. While statistical reports highlight the prevalence of insecurity in Nigeria, there remains a gap in understanding lived psychological impacts. Quantitative surveys capture the scale of trauma but often neglect the voices of survivors who articulate their experiences in deeply personal terms. This research aims to bridge that gap by employing qualitative interviews to explore the psychological consequences of kidnapping, terrorism, and police brutality on Nigerian citizens.

The objectives of this study are to:

1. examine the psychological impacts of kidnapping, terrorism, and police brutality on survivors in Nigeria.
2. explore coping strategies employed by affected individuals.
3. assess perceptions of safety and trust in authorities following these experiences.
4. analyze broader community-level impacts of insecurity.
5. recommend interventions and reforms for psychological recovery and institutional trust.

Literature Review

Insecurity

Insecurity refers to a state of uncertainty, fear, or vulnerability caused by real or perceived threats to safety, stability, or wellbeing (Owolabi & Adeniran, 2021). Globally, insecurity manifests in forms such as armed

conflict, terrorism, organized crime, and police violence. In Nigeria, insecurity has escalated significantly over the last decade, largely driven by the activities of Boko Haram, banditry, communal clashes, and incidents of police brutality (Akinyetun, 2023). Since 2020, Nigeria has experienced heightened cases of kidnapping for ransom, terrorist attacks in the Northeast, and widespread protests against police brutality under the #EndSARS movement, which revealed deep systemic failures in law enforcement (Adesina, 2021).

Insecurity, which has come in different forms as Boko Haram, Fulani herdsmen, armed banditry and kidnapping, is causing more fear for the lives of the common people. This is compounded by hunger, unemployment, infrastructure, and other vices too numerous to mention. The root cause of security challenges is crime, which is used to be decided by people because it is opposed to both natural and divine laws. Regrettably, crime is in its highest peak now in Nigeria. It is no novel; it is rather a full-time job for many good Nigerians. Troubles, gruesome murders, robberies by violence, rape, cultism, ritual killings, bribery and official corruption, obtaining goods or money by pretences, Child and student kidnappings and abductions, religious and political violence associated with bomb blasts and use of other sophisticated offensive weapons to destroy lives and properties (Agboola, 2020). These endless inhumane attitudes are enough to say that Nigeria is a crime-infested nation. It is a shame, a grossly unpardonable thing that our hands are handcuffed to these sorts of crimes where human beings are treated like wolves and reptiles that are killed without mercy.

Nigeria and security challenges

Nigeria is facing a security crisis due to inadequate and misguided security agendas. Every country exists to provide security to all its citizens. However, Nigeria struggles with myriad issues, including food, financial, transport, and healthcare insecurity, personal and national security issues, political and

tribal/ethnic crises, political assassinations, kidnappings, armed robberies, human trafficking, environmental degradation, and separatist agitations.

The conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and farmers arose from encroachment on farmlands by herders. These clashes have devastated communities, displacing them and causing significant loss of livelihoods. Herdsmen attribute these conflicts to religious differences and the killing of their cows, while farmers view herdsmen as threats to their crops and agricultural produce (Ozoigbo, 2019). These deadly crises between herdsmen and farmers have become one of Nigeria's major insecurity problems, second only to Boko Haram in terms of impact (Okoro, 2018). According to Okoro (2018), the herdsmen have sacked whole communities, abducted elder statesmen, burned churches, killed church priests and other worshippers, killed police officers, committed rape, looted, and perpetrated other heinous crimes, while the government has done little to address the situation. This poses a serious threat to national security and development. The displacement of farmers from affected communities has drastically reduced agricultural production in Nigeria, contributing to a food security crisis (Budgit Foundation, 2024). The socio-economic impacts of Fulani herdsmen conflicts are comparable to the consequences of Boko Haram insurgency due to the emergence of terrorism activities. These conflicts have adversely affected Nigeria's economy, particularly the agricultural sector (Okoro,

Kidnapping

2018). In Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara states, it is estimated that 50-75 percent of the land area is becoming desert. These environmental changes have devastated agriculture and human livelihoods, forcing millions of pastoralists and others to migrate southward in search of productive land. Migration was initially seasonal, with herders spending December to May in the central zone before returning north (World Food Programme, 2024).

Francis Idowu Akinsowon (2021) identifies some factors that constitute a comprehensive notion of security:

1. Political security: Freedom from domination and arbitrary government.
2. Economic and social security: Freedom from poverty and wants.
3. Cultural security: Freedom from ethnic and religious domination.
4. Environmental security: Freedom from environmental destruction and resource insecurity.
5. Food security: Access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Types of Insecurity in Nigeria

Insecurity in Nigeria has become a pressing socio-political and psychological challenge, deeply rooted in structural weaknesses, poor governance, economic hardship, and historical conflicts. In recent years, insecurity has manifested in multiple forms, but three categories stand out in both prevalence and impact: kidnapping, terrorism, and police brutality. These manifestations not only threaten national stability but also leave lasting psychological scars on individuals and communities (Okoye et al., 2021; Yakasai et al., 2022).

Kidnapping for ransom has become one of the most pervasive forms of insecurity in Nigeria, particularly from the early 2010s onwards. Initially associated with militancy in the Niger Delta, kidnapping has spread across the country, especially in the northwest and north-central regions (Yakasai et al., 2022). Victims include schoolchildren, commuters, expatriates, and even traditional rulers. For instance, the mass abduction of over 300 schoolgirls from Chibok in 2014 by Boko Haram drew international attention to the crisis. However, abductions of schoolchildren have continued in Zamfara, Kaduna, and Niger States (Reuters, 2024). This crime is often financially motivated, with ransom demands running into millions of naira. Families are forced to sell properties or crowdsource funds to secure the release of loved ones. Beyond the immediate financial strain, the psychological aftermath is profound: survivors often experience trauma, anxiety, and nightmares, while communities live in constant fear of recurrence. The government's weak response further fuels public mistrust in institutions (Umar & Ahmed, 2023).

Terrorism

Nigeria has faced terrorism primarily through the insurgency of Boko Haram since 2009. The group, whose name loosely translates to "Western education is forbidden," has targeted schools, markets, worship centers, and public spaces in the northeastern region, leading to mass displacement and widespread trauma (Guardian, 2024). Its splinter group, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), has intensified attacks on both civilians and military targets, further destabilizing communities. The terrorism crisis has displaced millions of Nigerians, with estimates showing over 2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the northeast alone (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2023).

Living in IDP camps exposes survivors to secondary forms of insecurity, such as gender-based violence, poor health facilities, and a lack of livelihood opportunities. Terrorism has instilled a collective sense of fear and hypervigilance across the country. Many citizens avoid public gatherings, restrict movement, and limit trust in strangers due to the unpredictability of attacks (Akinyemi, 2022).

Police Brutality

While kidnapping and terrorism are often attributed to non-state actors, insecurity also manifests through state violence, particularly in the form of police brutality. The Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit of the Nigerian Police Force, became infamous for extrajudicial killings, torture, and harassment of young Nigerians, especially those perceived as “wealthy” due to their dress style, gadgets, or cars (Okoye et al., 2021). The situation culminated in the 2020 #EndSARS protests, where millions of Nigerians, mostly youths, took to the streets demanding an end to police impunity. The protests were met with excessive force, most notably the Lekki Toll Gate shooting, where security forces opened fire on peaceful demonstrators (Al Jazeera, 2022). This event solidified widespread public perception of the state as a perpetrator of insecurity rather than a protector. Police brutality leaves survivors with feelings of anger, helplessness, and trauma. Victims often distrust law enforcement and avoid reporting crimes for fear of victimization. On a collective level, police violence undermines civic trust, weakens democratic accountability, and drives civic disengagement, especially among the youth who feel alienated from governance structures (Adebajo, 2023).

Effects of Insecurity in Nigeria: Impacts on Growth, Poverty, and Development

Insecurity in Nigeria profoundly undermines economic growth, poverty reduction, and broad-based development. While much global

literature centres on large-scale conflicts, Nigeria’s urban insecurity, characterised by kidnapping, militant insurgency, communal clashes, and ethnoreligious violence, is increasingly recognised as a major barrier to sustainable development (Odalonu, 2022). These threats stifle economic activity, discourage investment, and divert resources away from essential services like health and education (Oyigebe & Meshach, 2023).

A critical effect of insecurity is its dampening impact on enterprise development. Omeje, Mba, and Anyanwu (2023) demonstrate that various forms of insecurity, such as banditry, kidnappings, and territorial conflicts, significantly hinder business growth and survival.

Similarly, insecurity negatively influences foreign direct investment (FDI). Ajibua (2025) finds a clear negative relationship between insecurity and FDI inflows in Nigeria from 2002 to 2023. Insecurity leads to reputational risks, deterring investors who seek stable environments and predictable returns. The decline in macro-level investment, in turn, slows job creation, revenue generation, and overall economic growth, exacerbating unemployment and poverty. Beyond business and investment, insecurity also impairs agricultural productivity, especially in conflict zones. A 2025 study in Benue State revealed that each increment in insecurity leads to substantial reductions of 0.211% in crop output and 0.311% in livestock output. These declines are significant in a region heavily dependent on agriculture, triggering food shortages, income loss for farmers, and rising hunger (Ijirshar et al., 2025).

In rural areas, insecurity further disrupts socio-political and economic development. Anikwudike and Agabi (2024) note that persistent attacks force farmers to abandon farms, dismantle local economies, hinder political engagement, and increase unemployment. With agricultural activities halted and livelihoods shattered, food systems collapse, and communities spiral into deeper

poverty. The macro-level social and economic consequences of insecurity are clear. Quantitative analysis also reveals that excessive security spending reduces public investment in critical social sectors. Yusuf & Mohd (2023) and Magaji, Musa & Ismail (2024) emphasize that funds diverted to security operations undercut investments in education, health, and infrastructure key pillars for long-term poverty reduction and human capital development. This resource misallocation entrenches inequality and stifles inclusive growth.

Understanding Insecurity Issues in Nigeria Through Trauma Theory

Trauma Theory provides a useful framework for understanding the psychological and social consequences of insecurity in Nigeria, particularly in relation to kidnapping, terrorism, and police brutality. Trauma Theory posits that exposure to lifethreatening events overwhelms an individual's capacity to cope, often resulting in long-term psychological distress such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, emotional numbness, and a disrupted sense of safety.

In the Nigerian context, repeated exposure to violence and uncertainty has normalized fear and hypervigilance among citizens. Victims of kidnapping and terrorism often experience prolonged captivity, unpredictability, and perceived helplessness conditions that Trauma Theory identifies as key triggers of complex trauma. Similarly, police brutality represents institutional trauma, where harm is inflicted by authorities expected to provide protection. This betrayal intensifies psychological injury and contributes to loss of trust in state institutions. From a trauma perspective, insecurity in Nigeria extends beyond physical harm to include collective and intergenerational trauma. Communities affected by recurring violence develop shared fear, silence, and avoidance behaviors, which weaken social cohesion. Trauma Theory therefore underscores the need for trauma-

informed security reforms, accessible mental health services, and community-based psychosocial interventions to promote healing, resilience, and national recovery.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore the psychological effects of insecurity in Nigeria using Lagos state as a case study. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate, as it provides an in-depth understanding of lived experiences, emotions, and coping mechanisms of individuals directly affected by insecurity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Specifically, semi-structured interviews were employed, allowing flexibility to probe participants' perspectives while ensuring coverage of key themes such as trauma, anxiety, and trust in institutions.

Participants.

The study involved five individuals selected based on their direct exposure to insecurity-related experiences in Lagos city. Two participants were survivors of kidnapping incidents, one was a survivor of terrorist violence, and two were victims of police brutality. This diversity in experiences offered a nuanced understanding of the different manifestations of insecurity in Nigeria. The participants ranged in age from 22 to 45 years and were drawn from various urban and semi-urban communities in northern and southern Nigeria.

Sampling Technique.

A purposive sampling method was adopted to deliberately select participants with firsthand experiences of insecurity (Etikan & Bala, 2017). This approach ensured the collection of rich and relevant data for addressing the study objectives.

Data Collection.

Data were collected through individual interviews lasting between 45 and 60 minutes.

The interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via secure online platforms depending on participant availability and safety concerns. Interview guides covered topics such as emotional impact, coping strategies, and perceptions of institutional response. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Ethical Considerations.

This study adhered to standard ethical protocols. Participants were provided with informed consent forms outlining the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw, and assurance of confidentiality and anonymity. Identifying details were removed from transcripts, and pseudonyms were used in reporting findings. Given the sensitive nature of the subject, the participants were also provided with referrals to mental health support services if needed.

RESULT

This section presents the findings from the semi-structured interviews conducted with five participants: two survivors of kidnapping, one survivor of terrorism, and two survivors of police brutality. The analysis is structured around the study's research questions, focusing on the psychological effects of insecurity, coping strategies, trust in authorities, community impacts, and proposed reforms.

Psychological Effects of Insecurity

Survivors consistently reported deep psychological scars manifesting as trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), fear, nightmares, hypervigilance, mistrust, and social withdrawal. Kidnapping victims particularly described prolonged fear and panic attacks, while the terrorism survivor emphasised collective trauma, noting that entire communities live in a state of constant vigilance. Police brutality survivors reported anger, helplessness, and cynicism toward state institutions, aligning with the concept of learned helplessness, where repeated exposure to uncontrollable harm leads to resignation. Table 4.1 shows the Psychological Effects Reported by Participants. These findings reveal that insecurity in Nigeria generates individualized trauma (panic, PTSD) and collective trauma (community-wide fear, grief). Kidnapping instils ongoing vulnerability; terrorism perpetuates hypervigilance and societal mourning; and police brutality erodes institutional legitimacy, producing anger and hopelessness. Trauma theory helps explain how exposure to violence disrupts survivors' emotional regulation and social functioning. The responses align with social trust theory, as repeated betrayal by institutions weakens trust in authorities and diminishes civic engagement.

Table 1: Psychological Effects . Reported by Participants

Participant	Experience Type	Psychological Effects Reported
P1	Kidnapping	Panic attacks, fear of strangers, nightmares, social isolation
P2	Kidnapping	Flashbacks, distrust of public spaces, anxiety, insomnia

P3	Terrorism	Collective fear, hypervigilance, grief for community losses, depression
P4	Police brutality	Anger, helplessness, reduced trust in law enforcement, civic withdrawal
P5	Police brutality	Trauma, recurring fear during protests, mistrust of justice system

Coping Strategies

Table 2 shows that the participants described varied coping mechanisms, including religion, family support, therapy, resilience practices, and avoidance of triggering environments. The coping strategies adopted by survivors of violence reveal both individual resilience and systemic gaps in support structures. Across all cases, participants leaned heavily on spirituality, creative outlets, routine-building, and social solidarity to manage their psychological distress. Survivors of kidnapping relied most on faith practices, journaling, and family encouragement, which helped reduce feelings of isolation. However, their reluctance to seek professional therapy highlights the influence of stigma and cultural barriers in mental health care. For terrorism survivors, religious

practices combined with NGO-provided counselling were particularly effective. This suggests that multi-layered support systems, which integrate spiritual, cultural, and professional interventions, can yield better outcomes in trauma recovery. The role of community rebuilding activities further emphasized how collective resilience fosters healing after widespread violence. Police brutality survivors displayed different patterns, relying on activism, art, music, and online communities as primary coping strategies. Peer networks and activist groups acted as informal therapeutic spaces, demonstrating the importance of alternative, trust-based healing communities in contexts where formal support is inaccessible or distrusted.

Table 2: Coping Strategies Adopted by the Participants

Participant	Personal Strategies/Resources	Professional Help	Importance of Family, Friends, Community Support
P1	Relied on prayer, journaling, and daily routines to regain a sense of control.	Did not seek formal therapy due to stigma, but used informal peer support groups.	Family provided emotional encouragement, which helped reduce isolation.
P2	Engaged in physical exercise, avoided high-risk areas, and practised mindfulness.	Sought therapy but discontinued due to cost.	Community members showed solidarity, which reinforced survival strength.
P3	Adopted religious faith practices and storytelling to process trauma.	Attended counseling organized by an NGO; found it very helpful in reducing nightmares.	Community rebuilding activities restored hope and fostered resilience.

P4	Engaged in activism and awareness campaigns as a form of empowerment.	Did not seek therapy, citing mistrust of institutions.	Peer activists and close friends offered solidarity and shared healing spaces.
P5	Relied on music, art, and self-expression as emotional release.	Tried counseling once but felt dismissed, so did not continue.	Family support was weak, but online communities offered validation and healing.

4.3 Trust in Authorities and Sense of Safety

Table 4.3. shows that Trust in authorities was universally low. The findings from Section D reveal that insecurity in Nigeria not only leaves survivors traumatized but also erodes their sense of safety and weakens institutional trust. Across all participants, a strong theme of persistent fear and hypervigilance emerged. Kidnapping victims (Participants 1 and 2) described heightened anxiety when traveling, especially at night, reflecting how insecurity shapes routine mobility and social participation. Similarly, the terrorism survivor (Participant 3) continues to associate crowded spaces with imminent danger, highlighting long-lasting trauma linked to past violence. Police brutality survivors (Participants 4 and

5) demonstrated an additional layer of insecurity, fear of state authorities themselves making them suspicious of those meant to protect them. A second critical theme was erosion of trust in institutions. All five participants expressed profound disillusionment with government and security agencies, citing corruption, negligence, and impunity as key factors. The narratives underscore a cyclical problem: when survivors lose faith in protective structures, they disengage from state institutions, further undermining governance and accountability. For example, Participants 4 and 5 emphasized that police are not merely ineffective but are active agents of insecurity, eroding the moral authority of law enforcement.

Table 3: Trust in Authorities

Question	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5
Since your experience, how safe do you feel in your community?	Feels unsafe traveling at night; constant fear of reoccurrence.	Avoids long-distance travel; feels insecure in public spaces.	Still haunted by bomb blasts; feels unsafe in crowded areas.	Believes no environment is safe; constant suspicion of police.	Distrustful of public gatherings; feels partially safe only at home.

How has the incident influenced your level of trust in government, security agencies, or other institutions?	Lost faith in police and government promises; feels abandoned.	No trust in security agencies; believes corruption fuels insecurity.	Deep mistrust of the army and government due to poor protection.	Strong distrust of police; sees them as perpetrators of violence.	Trust in government completely eroded; feels institutions are complicit.
Do you feel that authorities responded adequately to your case? Why or why not?	Authorities delayed action; ransom was paid privately.	No adequate response; police seemed uninterested.	Minimal government support; community had to rebuild without aid.	Authorities ignored complaints; no accountability for brutality.	No justice or follow-up; authorities dismissed the case.

Community-Level Impacts

Table 4. shows how insecurity in its various forms, kidnapping, terrorism, and police brutality, extends beyond individual victims to reshape entire communities. Migration and displacement emerged as a recurrent theme, particularly among participants from regions affected by kidnapping and terrorism. For example, P1 and P3 explained that families and entire villages had relocated to urban centers or safer regions, seeking security. Fear and mistrust were consistent across all participants. P1 and P2 emphasized that community gatherings such as markets, weddings, and religious events were shrinking due to safety concerns. Similarly, P3 reported that daily activities like farming and schooling had drastically declined, creating a ripple effect on social and economic life. This illustrates how insecurity undermines not only physical safety but also economic stability and cultural cohesion.

A significant finding is the erosion of social trust. Nearly all participants noted that mistrust and

suspicion now characterize community relations. P1 highlighted that neighbors no longer freely interact, while P3 observed that people increasingly isolate themselves and restrict interactions to close family members. This deterioration of social bonds suggests that insecurity fosters a culture of fear, reducing collective resilience and social solidarity.

The relationship with authorities and law enforcement was another dominant theme. Both police brutality survivors (P4 and P5) stressed that the community no longer views the police as protectors but rather as threats. These responses indicate that these challenges are not short-term disruptions but long-lasting transformations in community dynamics. All five participants agreed that insecurity fosters enduring changes: mistrust, reduced cooperation, displacement, and hostility toward authorities. Such long-term consequences reinforce the cyclical nature of insecurity, where weakened community bonds and poor trust in institutions further reduce collective capacity to resist or recover from violence.

Table 4: Participants' responses on Community Impacts

Participant	In what ways has insecurity affected your wider community (migration, mistrust, fear, etc.)?	Do you think these incidents create long-term changes in how people relate to each other in your community?
P1	Many families have relocated to urban centers to escape abductions. People live in constant fear, and night travel has nearly stopped.	Yes, mistrust is now widespread. Neighbors no longer freely interact; fearing being betrayed or targeted.
P2	The community has become more fragmented; gatherings like markets and weddings are less attended for safety reasons.	Definitely. Fear has made people more cautious, and the sense of unity is fading.
P3	Entire villages have been displaced. Fear and suspicion dominate daily life, with reduced farming and schooling.	Yes, people now isolate themselves and rely only on close family, limiting broader social bonds.
P4	The youth avoid police checkpoints and public demonstrations; community trust in law enforcement is nonexistent.	Yes, police are now seen as predators rather than protectors, creating a hostile relationship with authorities.
P5	Fear of raids has caused reduced nightlife and economic activity. People mistrust both the police and sometimes each other.	Yes, long-term hostility and resentment have replaced cooperation with authorities, worsening community tension.

Suggested Reforms and Interventions

As seen in Table 4.5. Participants suggested reforms including police accountability, better security intelligence, psychological counselling for survivors, and stronger community policing systems. The findings underscore a strong convergence among participants on the urgent need for psychosocial support, institutional reform, and systemic interventions to address the psychological burden of insecurity in Nigeria. From the survivors' perspective, psychological recovery requires structured interventions such as trauma counselling, therapy, support groups, and community-driven rehabilitation programs. Notably, participants who experienced kidnapping

and terrorism (P1—P3) placed greater emphasis on counselling, trauma centers, vocational rehabilitation, and safe spaces, highlighting the severe psychological and socioeconomic disruptions that follow such traumatic events. In contrast, participants who suffered police brutality (P4-P5) stressed the importance of legal reforms, justice, and institutional accountability, reflecting a deep connection between psychological recovery and the restoration of trust in the justice system.

A recurring theme across all participants is the role of government and communities in addressing insecurity. Survivors consistently identified police reform, stronger community policing,

accountability mechanisms, and proactive government responses as critical to restoring trust. For example, P4 and P5 emphasized police retraining and oversight. At the same time, P1 and P2 pointed to the failure of security agencies to respond adequately in kidnapping incidents, calling for intelligence-led policing and compensation schemes for affected families. Meanwhile, P3 highlighted the broader structural challenge of terrorism, advocating for counter-terrorism investment,

border security improvements, and community peacebuilding initiatives. In addition to institutional reforms, participants underlined the importance of community resilience and mental health destigmatization. P5's suggestion of public awareness campaigns on mental health and survivor resilience reflects a recognition that Nigerian society often neglects the emotional consequences of insecurity, leading many survivors to suffer in silence.

Table 5: Suggested Reforms by the response

Participant	What kind of reforms or interventions could help survivors like yourself recover psychologically?	In your view, what should the government and communities do differently to reduce insecurity and its psychological effects?
P1	Suggested free access to trauma counseling, safe shelters, and rehabilitation programs tailored for kidnapping victims.	Emphasized stronger rural security patrols, intelligence-led policing, and government compensation for affected families.
P2	Recommended community-based peer support groups and long-term therapy services provided at low or no cost.	Urged the government to increase police accountability, address corruption, and improve rapid response to distress calls.
P3	Called for specialized trauma centers, vocational training, and reintegration programs for survivors of terrorism.	Recommended strengthening counter-terrorism strategies, improving border security, and investing in community peacebuilding initiatives.
P4	Advocated for legal reforms, independent police oversight, and justice for victims as part of healing.	Highlighted the need for reforms in the Nigerian Police Force, including retraining officers on human rights and community trust-building.
P5	Suggested public awareness campaigns on mental health and survivor resilience to reduce stigma.	Recommended partnership between government and civil society to strengthen mental health systems and improve security sector transparency.

Discussion

This study illustrates how insecurity in Nigeria functions both as a personal trauma and a community-wide crisis, reshaping patterns of social trust, safety, and collective resilience. Addressing these challenges requires integrated reforms that strengthen psychosocial support services, rebuild trust in institutions, and enhance community-based interventions. The findings of this study highlight the profound psychological consequences of insecurity in Nigeria, particularly as it relates to kidnapping, terrorism, and police brutality. Survivors reported experiences of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, hypervigilance, and social withdrawal, which align with earlier research that demonstrates the long-lasting psychological toll of violence and trauma (Eze, 2022). These outcomes are not only personal but extend to wider communities, producing collective fear and mistrust of social institutions. The coping strategies varied among participants, with many relying on religious practices, family support, and community solidarity. This reflects a broader pattern in Nigerian society where social and cultural resources serve as critical buffers against adversity (Adebayo & Oloyede, 2021). However, access to formal psychological support services remains limited, highlighting the structural gaps in

Nigeria's mental health system (Okafor et al., 2023). The reliance on informal networks suggests resilience but also reveals systemic neglect in providing trauma-informed care for survivors.

The issue of trust in government and security agencies emerged strongly, with most participants expressing disillusionment over inadequate institutional response. This finding supports existing literature that insecurity in Nigeria is exacerbated by weak governance and accountability failures (Ibrahim & Hassan, 2022). Participants noted that authorities often failed to respond adequately, fueling distrust and perceptions of abandonment. This lack of institutional trust has significant implications, as effective recovery and security reforms require confidence in governance structures.

Conclusion

This study reveals that insecurity in Nigeria deeply affects survivors' psychological well-being, erodes trust in institutions, and disrupts community cohesion. Coping strategies are often informal due to limited professional support. Comprehensive reforms in governance, security, accountability, and mental health services are essential to restore resilience, trust, and collective safety.

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Interview Question

Psychological Impacts of Insecurity on Survivors of Kidnapping, Terrorism, and Police Brutality in Nigeria

Good day, and thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. My name is Olabanji Edun and I am conducting a study to explore the psychological impacts of insecurity on survivors of kidnapping, terrorism, and police brutality in Nigeria.

This interview will last approximately 30-60 minutes. Participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. All information you provide will remain confidential, and your identity will be kept anonymous. You may choose not to answer any question you are uncomfortable with.

Section A: Psychological Effects of Insecurity

1. Could you describe your experience with kidnapping/terrorism/police brutality?

2. How has this experience affected your emotional and psychological well-being (e.g., anxiety, fear, stress, or trauma)?

Section B: Coping Strategies

3. What personal strategies or resources have helped you cope with the aftermath of your experience?
4. Have you sought professional help, such as therapy or counselling? If yes, how helpful was it?
5. How important have family, friends, or community support been in your recovery?

Section C: Trust and Safety

6. Since your experience, how safe do you feel in your community?
7. How has the incident influenced your level of trust in the government, security agencies, or other institutions?
8. Do you feel that authorities responded adequately to your case? Why or why not?

Section D: Community and Social Dynamics

9. In what ways has insecurity affected your wider community (migration, mistrust, fear, etc.)?
10. Do you think these incidents create long-term changes in how people relate to each other in your community?

Section E: Recommendations and Reforms

11. What kind of reforms or interventions do you think could help survivors like yourself recover psychologically?
12. In your view, what should the government and communities do differently to reduce insecurity and its psychological effects?

Thank you very much for your time and for sharing your experiences with me. Your contributions are very valuable and will help us understand how insecurity affects individuals and communities in Nigeria.