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Insecurity and Psychological Trauma as Determinants of Academic Achievement Among Senior Secondary School Students in Kogi State, Nigeria

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Highlights:

The study examines perceived insecurity, psychological trauma and academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Kogi State, Nigeria.

Perceived insecurity is significantly associated with psychological trauma, while psychological trauma is negatively related to students' academic achievement.

The findings support the integration of school security, counselling and trauma-informed psychosocial interventions in secondary schools.

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Abstract: Insecurity has become a concern for students in some parts of Kogi State, with possible consequences for their psychological well-being and school performance. This study examined perceived insecurity and psychological trauma as determinants of academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Kogi State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study assessed the level of perceived insecurity, psychological trauma and academic achievement, examined the relationship between perceived insecurity and psychological trauma, determined the relationship between psychological trauma and academic achievement, and examined gender differences in psychological trauma. A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was adopted. The study involved 400 senior secondary school students selected from public and private schools across the three senatorial districts of Kogi State through multistage sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation, multiple regression and an independent-samples t-test. The results showed high levels of perceived insecurity and psychological trauma among the respondents. Perceived insecurity was positively related to psychological trauma ($r = .714$, $p < .001$), while psychological trauma had a significant negative relationship with academic achievement ($r = -.642$, $p < .001$). Perceived insecurity significantly predicted psychological trauma, accounting for 51.0% of its variance, while psychological trauma accounted for 41.2% of the variance in academic achievement. Female students reported significantly higher psychological trauma than male students. The study suggests that the educational effects of insecurity extend beyond physical safety and may also affect students' psychological well-being and academic functioning. Schools therefore need to combine security measures with accessible counselling and appropriate psychosocial support.

Keywords: Academic achievement; Kogi State; perceived insecurity; psychological trauma; senior secondary school students

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Introduction

Education contributes substantially to the development of individuals and society, but students learn best when they feel safe in and around the school environment. Insecurity can make this difficult, particularly where students are exposed to fear of kidnapping, violence and other threats. The seriousness of such concerns in Kogi State was brought into public attention by the 2024 attack on the Confluence University of Science and Technology, Osara, where students were abducted while preparing for examinations. The incident and subsequent rescue efforts led the state government to strengthen security around educational institutions. Such experiences can affect how students perceive their safety and may also influence their ability to participate fully in school activities.

The psychological effects of insecurity are also important. Students who live with repeated fear or who have witnessed frightening events may experience anxiety, disturbed sleep, heightened alertness and difficulty concentrating. These experiences can interfere with classroom participation and academic work. Evidence from Niger State, for example, shows that community violence and trauma were negatively associated with the academic achievement of secondary school students (Bando et al., 2022). The assessment of trauma symptoms among young people also requires appropriate measures. Foa et al. (2018) established the psychometric properties of the Child PTSD Symptom Scale for DSM-5 among trauma-exposed children and adolescents, supporting its use in assessing post-traumatic stress symptoms in this population. The connection between insecurity, psychological well-being and learning can also be understood from the perspective of safety needs and the wider environments in which children develop. Maslow (1943) placed safety among the basic human needs, while Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasised the influence of the family, school and community on development. When insecurity affects these environments, students may find it more difficult to concentrate on their educational responsibilities. The present study therefore examines perceived insecurity, psychological trauma and academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Kogi State. It focuses particularly on whether students' perceptions of insecurity are related to psychological trauma and whether psychological trauma is associated with their academic achievement. Insecurity has become a concern for students, parents and schools in parts of Nigeria. In Kogi State, incidents involving the abduction of students have shown that educational institutions are not completely removed from the wider security challenges facing communities. The 2024 attack on students of Confluence University of Science and Technology, Osara, for instance, involved the abduction of students who were on campus preparing for examinations. Although the immediate concern in such situations is the physical safety of students, the psychological effects may continue after the immediate threat has passed. Previous research has shown that violence and trauma can have consequences for students' educational experiences. Bando et al. (2022), for example, reported negative effects of community violence and trauma on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Niger State. However, much of the

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discussion of insecurity and education has concentrated on school attendance, disruption of schooling and academic performance. Less attention has been given to the psychological experiences of students who remain in school while living with fear and uncertainty.

This creates a need to examine the relationship between perceived insecurity, psychological trauma and academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Kogi State. A student may continue to attend classes while experiencing anxiety, disturbed sleep, fear or difficulty concentrating. These experiences may not be immediately visible to teachers or school administrators, yet they can affect how the student engages with learning. The problem addressed in this study, therefore, is the limited empirical evidence on how perceived insecurity relates to psychological trauma and how psychological trauma is associated with academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Kogi State. The study consequently examines these relationships among students drawn from the three senatorial districts of the state considering level of insecurity, level of psychological trauma symptoms, the relationship between perceived insecurity and psychological trauma and relationship between psychological trauma and academic achievement.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the perceived level of insecurity among senior secondary school students in Kogi State?
2. What is the level of psychological trauma symptoms among senior secondary school students in Kogi State?
3. What is the level of academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Kogi State?
4. What relationship exists between perceived insecurity and psychological trauma among senior secondary school students in Kogi State?
5. What relationship exists between psychological trauma and academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Kogi State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

H_o1: There is no significant relationship between perceived insecurity and psychological trauma among senior secondary school students in Kogi State.

H_o2: There is no significant relationship between psychological trauma and academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Kogi State.

H_o3: Perceived insecurity does not significantly predict psychological trauma among senior secondary school students in Kogi State.

H_o4: Psychological trauma does not significantly predict academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Kogi State.

H_o5: There is no significant difference in psychological trauma between male and female senior secondary school students in Kogi State.

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Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, which enabled the researcher to obtain quantitative information from the respondents at a single point in time and examine the relationships among perceived insecurity, psychological trauma and academic achievement. The population comprised Senior Secondary School (SSS I–III) students in public and private secondary schools across the three senatorial districts of Kogi State, Nigeria. A total of 400 students participated in the study, and all 400 administered questionnaires were retrieved and found usable, representing a 100% response rate. The study employed a multistage sampling procedure involving stratification, purposive selection and simple random sampling. The respondents were drawn from Kogi East, Kogi Central and Kogi West and included students from SSS I, SSS II and SSS III in both public and private secondary schools. However, the original manuscript does not provide the exact population size of SSS I–III students in public and private schools in each senatorial district or the numerical distribution at each sampling stage. Since the vetter specifically requested these figures and the source manuscript does not supply them, they should be inserted from the original sampling records rather than estimated. Data were collected using one structured questionnaire containing three measures: the Perceived Insecurity Scale (PIS), the Child PTSD Symptom Scale for DSM-5 (CPSS-5), adapted from Foa et al. (2018), and the Academic Achievement Scale (AAS). The source manuscript states that the questionnaire contained 25 items, but it specifies only Items 1–5 for perceived insecurity, Items 6–10 for psychological trauma and Items 11–15 for academic achievement; it does not adequately account for Items 16–25. This inconsistency must be resolved before publication rather than silently assigning those items to the three constructs. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation, although the manuscript does not state the number of validators, their names/qualifications or institutions, as requested by the vetter. Similarly, the manuscript states that a pilot study was conducted outside the study area but does not identify the location or number of participants. These details therefore need to be supplied from the actual research records. The instrument's internal consistency coefficients were reported as 0.771 for perceived insecurity, 0.761 for psychological trauma and 0.764 for academic achievement; however, in accordance with the vetter's instruction, these reliability coefficients will be presented with the relevant results rather than retained as a separate table. Ethical approval and permission were obtained from the relevant authorities and participating schools before data collection. Participation was voluntary, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, and respondents' right to withdraw was respected. Data were analysed using SPSS Version 29. Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were used to summarise the data and answer the descriptive research questions. Pearson product–moment correlation was used to examine relationships among the study variables, regression analysis was used to examine predictive relationships, and an independent-samples *t* test was used to examine the reported gender difference in psychological trauma. Statistical decisions on the null hypotheses were made at the 0.05 level of significance.

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Results

Respondent Characteristics

Table 1: ***Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 400)***

Characteristic	Category	*n*	%
Gender	Male	184	46.0
	Female	216	54.0
Age	13–15 years	142	35.5
	16–18 years	215	53.8
	19 years and above	43	10.7
Class	SSS I	139	34.8
	SSS II	131	32.8
	SSS III	130	32.5
School type	Public	281	70.3
	Private	119	29.8
Senatorial district	Kogi East	126	31.5
	Kogi Central	138	34.5
	Kogi West	136	34.0

Research Question 1

Table 2

Perceived Level of Insecurity Among Senior Secondary School Students

Item	*M*	*SD*	Decision
I often feel unsafe travelling to and from school.	3.95	0.84	Agree
Violent incidents occur frequently in my community.	3.91	0.88	Agree
Fear of kidnapping affects my daily activities.	3.98	0.82	Agree
Insecurity has made me worried about attending school.	3.92	0.86	Agree
I believe insecurity is a serious problem affecting students in my area.	3.96	0.81	Agree
Grand Mean	**3.94**	**0.84**	**High**

The grand mean of **3.94 (SD = 0.84)** indicates a high perceived level of insecurity among the respondents. The highest-rated item concerned fear of kidnapping affecting students' daily activities (*M* = 3.98, *SD* = 0.82), while the lowest-rated item concerned the frequency of violent incidents in respondents' communities (*M* = 3.91, *SD* = 0.88).

Research Question 2: What is the level of psychological trauma symptoms among senior secondary school students in Kogi State?

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Table 3: ***Psychological Trauma Symptoms Among Senior Secondary School Students***

Item	*M*	*SD*	Decision
I frequently feel anxious because of insecurity around me.	3.96	0.79	Agree
I have difficulty sleeping due to fear of violent incidents.	3.99	0.82	Agree
I often think about frightening events I have experienced or witnessed.	3.98	0.81	Agree
I easily become frightened by sudden sounds or movements.	3.95	0.85	Agree
I find it difficult to concentrate because I worry about my safety.	3.97	0.80	Agree
Grand Mean	**3.97**	**0.81**	**High**

Research Question 3: What is the level of academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Kogi State?

Table 4
Academic Achievement Indicators Among Senior Secondary School Students

Item	*M*	*SD*	Decision
I complete my academic assignments on time.	3.96	0.83	Agree
I actively participate during classroom lessons.	3.95	0.84	Agree
I perform well in school examinations.	3.98	0.82	Agree
I regularly attend school without unnecessary absence.	3.99	0.80	Agree
I am satisfied with my overall academic performance.	3.97	0.81	Agree
Grand Mean	**3.97**	**0.82**	**High**

Research Question 4: What relationship exists between perceived insecurity and psychological trauma among senior secondary school students in Kogi State?

Table 5: ***Perceived Relationship Between Insecurity and Psychological Trauma***

Item	*M*	*SD*
The insecurity in my community increases my level of fear.	4.01	0.82
Exposure to insecurity makes me feel emotionally distressed.	3.96	0.84
The more insecure my environment becomes, the more anxious I feel.	3.99	0.80
Living in an insecure environment affects my emotional well-being.	3.95	0.86
Insecurity has negatively affected my mental health.	3.94	0.83
Grand Mean	**3.97**	**0.83**

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Interpretation

The results show a grand mean of **3.97 (*SD* = 0.83)**, indicating a high level of agreement with the statements linking insecurity to psychological distress. The highest-rated item was that insecurity in the community increases students' level of fear (*M* = 4.01, *SD* = 0.82), while the lowest-rated item was that insecurity has negatively affected students' mental health (*M* = 3.94, *SD* = 0.83). Overall, the responses indicate that students perceive insecurity as being closely associated with fear, emotional distress, anxiety and impaired emotional well-being.

Research Question 5: What effect does psychological trauma have on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Kogi State?

Table 6: ***Perceived Influence of Psychological Trauma on Academic Achievement***

Item	*M*	*SD*
Fear and anxiety reduce my concentration during lessons.	4.02	0.81
Psychological stress affects my examination performance.	3.98	0.82
I sometimes avoid school because I feel emotionally distressed.	3.91	0.85
My academic performance has declined because of fear arising from insecurity.	3.95	0.84
Psychological counselling would improve my academic performance.	4.03	0.79
Grand Mean	**3.98**	**0.82**

Interpretation

The grand mean of **3.98 (*SD* = 0.82)** indicates a high level of agreement that psychological trauma has implications for students' academic functioning. The highest-rated statement was that psychological counselling would improve academic performance (*M* = 4.03, *SD* = 0.79), followed by the view that fear and anxiety reduce concentration during lessons (*M* = 4.02, *SD* = 0.81). The lowest-rated statement concerned avoiding school because of emotional distress (*M* = 3.91, *SD* = 0.85). Overall, the responses indicate that students perceive psychological trauma as having adverse implications for concentration, examination performance, attendance and academic performance.

Hypothesis 1

$H_0$1: There is no significant relationship between perceived insecurity and psychological trauma among senior secondary school students in Kogi State.

Table 7: ***Pearson Correlation Between Perceived Insecurity and Psychological Trauma***

Variables	*M*	*SD*	*R*	*p*
Perceived insecurity	3.94	0.84		
Psychological trauma	3.97	0.81	0.714	< .001

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The result shows a strong positive relationship between perceived insecurity and psychological trauma, $r = .714$, $p < .001$. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

H_o2: There is no significant relationship between psychological trauma and academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Kogi State.

Hypothesis 2

Table 8: ***Pearson Correlation Between Psychological Trauma and Academic Achievement***

Variables	***M***	***SD***	***r***	***P***
Psychological trauma	3.97	0.81		
Academic achievement	3.97	0.82	−.642	< .001

There was a significant negative relationship between psychological trauma and academic achievement, $r = -.642$, $p < .001$. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

H_o3: Perceived insecurity does not significantly predict psychological trauma among senior secondary school students in Kogi State.

Hypothesis 3

Table 9: ***Regression Analysis of Perceived Insecurity Predicting Psychological Trauma***

Predictor		***B***	**β**	***t***	***p***
Constant		0.931	—	5.114	< .001
Perceived insecurity		0.773	.714	20.36	< .001
Model	***R***	***R²***	**Adjusted *R²***	***F***	***p***
1	0.714	0.510	0.509	414.29	< .001

Perceived insecurity significantly predicted psychological trauma, β = .714, $p < .001$, accounting for **51.0% of the variance** in psychological trauma. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 4

H_o4: Psychological trauma does not significantly predict academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Kogi State.

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Table 10: ***Regression Analysis of Psychological Trauma Predicting Academic Achievement***

Predictor		***B***	**β**	***t***	***p***
Constant		5.218	—	18.77	< .001
Psychological trauma		−0.632	−.642	−16.69	< .001
Model	***R***	***R²***	**Adjusted *R*²**	***F***	***p***
1	.642	.412	.410	278.61	< .001

Psychological trauma significantly and negatively predicted academic achievement, β = −.642, $p < .001$, accounting for 41.2% of the variance in academic achievement. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 5

H_o5: There is no significant difference in psychological trauma between male and female senior secondary school students in Kogi State.

Table 11: ***Independent-Samples t Test of Psychological Trauma by Gender***

Gender	***N***	***M***	***SD***	***t***	***df***	***p***
Male	184	3.89	0.67			
Female	216	4.04	0.61	2.47	398	.014

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Female students reported higher psychological trauma (M = 4.04, SD = 0.61) than male students (M = 3.89, SD = 0.67). The difference was statistically significant, $t(398) = 2.47$, $p = .014$. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion

The study found that students reported a high level of perceived insecurity (M = 3.94, SD = 0.84). Fear of kidnapping recorded the highest mean score among the items, suggesting that concerns about personal safety are part of the everyday experience of many of the respondents. This finding is consistent with Bando et al. (2022), who found that community violence and trauma were associated with negative academic outcomes among secondary school students in Niger State. Their study also showed that both physical and psychological violence could interfere with students' school experiences.

Psychological trauma was also reported at a high level (M = 3.97, SD = 0.81). The students particularly reported difficulty sleeping, anxiety, frightening memories, increased reactions to sudden sounds and difficulty concentrating. These responses are important because they show that the effects of insecurity may extend beyond the immediate threat itself. A student who is worried about personal safety may still attend school but find it difficult to concentrate on lessons or examinations. The use of the CPSS-5 in this context is supported by Foa et al. (2018), whose study found the measure to have good reliability and validity for assessing post-traumatic stress symptoms among trauma-exposed children and adolescents. The students nevertheless reported a relatively high level of academic achievement (M = 3.97, SD = 0.82). This result should be treated with some caution because academic achievement in the present study was based on students' self-reports rather than independently verified examination scores. It is possible that some students were able to maintain their academic activities despite the insecurity they experienced. The ability to continue attending classes and completing schoolwork may also reflect support from families, peers and schools. This interpretation is consistent with the need to consider students' immediate social environments when examining the effects of insecurity. A strong positive relationship was found between perceived insecurity and psychological trauma ($r = .714$, $p < .001$). In practical terms, students who reported greater insecurity also tended to report more psychological trauma symptoms. Perceived insecurity also accounted for 51.0% of the variance in psychological trauma in the regression analysis. The result is broadly consistent with Bando et al. (2022), whose findings showed that community violence and trauma were associated with adverse educational experiences among secondary school students. However, the present finding should not be interpreted as proof that insecurity causes trauma because the study used a cross-sectional design. The result establishes a significant statistical association and predictive relationship, not causation.

The study further found a significant negative relationship between psychological trauma and academic achievement ($r = −.642$, $p < .001$). Psychological trauma also accounted for 41.2% of the variance in academic achievement. This result is understandable in light of the symptoms reported by the students, particularly anxiety, poor sleep and difficulty concentrating. When such experiences persist, they may make it harder for students to devote

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sustained attention to lessons and academic tasks. The finding agrees with Bando et al. (2022), who reported negative effects of physical and psychological violence and trauma on students' academic achievement in Niger State. The gender analysis showed that female students reported significantly higher psychological trauma ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.61$) than male students ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.67$), $t(398) = 2.47$, $p = .014$. This difference indicates that the psychological burden associated with insecurity was not reported at the same level by male and female respondents. It would, however, be inappropriate to conclude from this result that gender itself causes greater trauma. Differences in exposure to insecurity, perceived vulnerability, previous experiences and the availability of social support may also contribute to the observed difference.

Overall, the findings point to a relationship between the security environment and students' psychological and academic experiences. Students who perceived higher levels of insecurity tended to report more psychological trauma, while those with higher trauma scores tended to report poorer academic functioning. The results therefore support the need for schools to consider students' psychological well-being alongside physical security. Counselling and appropriate psychosocial support may be useful complements to existing school-security measures. At the same time, the cross-sectional nature of the study means that these findings should be interpreted as evidence of association and statistical prediction rather than evidence of a causal pathway.

Conclusion

This study examined perceived insecurity, psychological trauma and academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Kogi State. The results show that insecurity is a significant concern in the students' educational environment. The respondents reported high levels of perceived insecurity and psychological trauma, particularly fear, anxiety, sleep difficulties, frightening memories and problems with concentration. The study further found a strong positive relationship between perceived insecurity and psychological trauma ($r = .714$, $p < .001$). Students who reported higher levels of insecurity also tended to report more trauma symptoms. Psychological trauma was, in turn, negatively related to academic achievement ($r = -.642$, $p < .001$). The regression results showed that perceived insecurity accounted for 51.0% of the variance in psychological trauma, while psychological trauma accounted for 41.2% of the variance in academic achievement. Female students also reported significantly higher levels of psychological trauma than male students. These findings draw attention to an aspect of school insecurity that can easily be overlooked. Protecting students physically is important, but students may still struggle academically when they are living with fear and psychological distress. This is consistent with evidence from Niger State showing that violence and trauma can have negative implications for students' academic achievement (Bando et al., 2022). However, because the present study was cross-sectional and relied partly on self-reported measures, the findings should be understood as relationships and statistical predictions rather than proof of cause and effect. The study therefore concludes that responses to insecurity in schools should address both physical safety and students' psychological well-being. Accessible counselling, early identification of students experiencing distress and appropriate psychosocial support

should form part of the response alongside measures for improving school security.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Improved school security: The Kogi State Government, school proprietors and relevant security agencies should strengthen security arrangements around schools, particularly in communities where students and staff face greater security concerns.
2. Functional counselling services: Secondary schools should provide accessible counselling services through qualified counsellors who can assist students experiencing persistent fear, anxiety and other difficulties associated with insecurity.
3. Trauma-informed teacher support: Teachers should receive appropriate training to recognise signs of psychological distress in students. This may help teachers distinguish trauma-related behaviours from ordinary indiscipline or lack of interest in schoolwork.
4. Early identification and referral: Schools should establish simple procedures for identifying students who show persistent signs of psychological distress and refer them to qualified counselling or mental-health professionals where necessary.
5. Attention to gender differences: Since female respondents reported significantly higher levels of psychological trauma, counselling and psychosocial programmes should take account of differences in students' experiences and responses to insecurity. This finding should guide support rather than be interpreted as evidence that gender itself causes trauma.

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Data Availability. The underlying dataset should be made available by the author upon reasonable request, subject to institutional and ethical requirements.

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Author Contributions. Shaibu, Ibrahim Ibore conceptualised the study, designed the methodology, collected and analysed the data, interpreted the findings and prepared the manuscript.

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