



THE METAMORPHOSIS OF INSECURITY IN NIGERIA: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EDUCATIONAL ECOSYSTEM AND THE WAY FORWARD

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria's security environment has evolved from relatively discrete and episodic threats towards a more diffuse, persistent and multidimensional condition with implications for educational continuity. This conceptual article examines how this transformation affects the Nigerian educational ecosystem and identifies pathways towards systemic resilience. Drawing on recent scholarly, policy and institutional literature, the article synthesises evidence on insecurity, educational vulnerability, disruption and resilience through an ecological systems perspective complemented by education-system resilience scholarship. It argues that insecurity affects education not only through direct attacks on schools but also through interconnected pathways involving displacement, restricted mobility, weakened livelihoods, teacher and learner withdrawal, infrastructure disruption, governance pressures and widening inequality. To integrate these relationships, the article proposes the Educational Ecosystem Insecurity–Resilience Framework (EEIRF), which links structural drivers, metamorphosing insecurity, educational exposure and vulnerability, ecosystem disruption, educational consequences, and resilience and transformation. The framework advances six conceptual propositions concerning multidimensionality, mediation, persistence, inequality, institutional resilience and anticipatory security. The article concludes that educational security in Nigeria should move beyond reactive protection of school premises towards coordinated, anticipatory and ecosystem-wide resilience capable of sustaining safety, inclusion, continuity, quality and equity.

Keywords: Insecurity; Educational Ecosystem; School Safety; Educational Disruption; Institutional Resilience; Nigeria; Sustainable Education



Introduction

Education depends on conditions of physical safety, social stability and institutional continuity. Yet armed conflict, organised violence, displacement and other forms of insecurity increasingly threaten the capacity of education systems to provide sustained and equitable learning opportunities. Globally, attacks on education have intensified, with more than 6,000 attacks on education and incidents involving the military use of schools and universities recorded in 2022–2023, affecting over 10,000 students and education personnel (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack [GCPEA], 2024). In Africa, the consequences are particularly consequential because insecurity often intersects with poverty, displacement, weak institutional capacity and pre-existing educational inequalities (Adelakun et al., 2026). Thus, insecurity is not merely a threat to individual safety; it can undermine the continuity, quality and equity of education. Nigeria illustrates this convergence with particular force. Its security landscape has evolved from predominantly conventional manifestations of insurgency and communal conflict into a more diffuse configuration involving banditry, kidnapping, farmer–herder violence, separatist violence, organised crime and attacks on educational institutions. Recent evidence from Katsina, Zamfara and Niger States identifies banditry, kidnapping and communal conflict as major disruptions to schooling, while also documenting displacement and constraints on access to education (UNICEF, 2025^a). The significance of this transformation lies not simply in the proliferation of threats but in their convergence and changing relationship with everyday social institutions. Insecurity has increasingly become embedded in the environments in which education is organised and experienced.

The term *metamorphosis* used in the study captures this qualitative transformation. Earlier threats, particularly terrorism and insurgency, were often associated with identifiable conflict zones and ideological actors. Contemporary insecurity is more fragmented, mobile and economically motivated, with kidnapping and banditry increasingly affecting communities and educational institutions beyond traditional conflict epicentres. The targeting of schools and learners illustrates this shift. UNICEF documented 19 attacks on schools in Nigeria during 2022–2023, contributing to the closure of 113 schools in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States (UNICEF, 2024a). The 2024 abduction of students in Kaduna further demonstrated that educational institutions remain exposed to evolving forms of organised violence (UNICEF, 2024b). In this context, insecurity should be understood as a dynamic and interconnected condition rather than a collection of isolated security incidents. Education is especially vulnerable because it constitutes an interconnected ecosystem involving learners, teachers, school leaders, families, communities, institutions, infrastructure and government policy. Disruption in one component can generate cascading effects across others. School attacks may produce immediate closures, but their consequences can extend to fear of attending school, displacement, teacher shortages, interrupted instruction, weakened institutional capacity, and widening educational inequalities. Recent evidence confirms that insecurity in Nigeria is already constraining educational access and disrupting schooling beyond the immediate site of violence (UNICEF, 2025^a). Consequently, protecting education requires attention not only to school premises but also to the wider social, institutional and policy environment within which learning occurs.



Although existing scholarship has documented the effects of terrorism, banditry, kidnapping and conflict on Nigerian education, much of the discussion remains fragmented around particular threats or outcomes such as school closures, enrolment and attendance. This fragmentation limits understanding of how multiple forms of insecurity interact and produce cumulative effects across the educational ecosystem. The conceptual problem, therefore, is not an absence of evidence but the absence of an integrated account of how Nigeria's changing security landscape translates into systemic educational vulnerability and resilience. This article conceptually examines the metamorphosis of insecurity in Nigeria and its implications for the educational ecosystem, focusing on the pathways through which insecurity disrupts educational access, participation, quality, governance and institutional resilience. It addresses four questions: (1) How has insecurity evolved into a multidimensional threat to education? (2) Through what pathways does insecurity disrupt the educational ecosystem? (3) What are the implications for learners, teachers, institutions and educational governance? (4) What conceptual pathways can strengthen educational resilience?

Conceptualising Insecurity

Insecurity is more appropriately understood as a multidimensional condition of vulnerability than as the mere absence of physical safety. In the Nigerian context, it encompasses exposure to violence, abduction and destruction, but also the social, psychological, economic and institutional conditions through which such threats constrain everyday life and access to essential services (Adelakun & Olorunsola, 2024; Adelakun et al., 2026). UNICEF's recent assessment of Katsina, Zamfara and Niger States demonstrates that insecurity simultaneously disrupts livelihoods, social cohesion, population stability and access to education, illustrating its interconnected rather than sector-specific character (UNICEF, 2025^a). Accordingly, this article distinguishes physical insecurity, involving threats to life, bodily safety and infrastructure; social insecurity, reflected in displacement, fractured community relations and weakened social cohesion; psychological insecurity, associated with persistent fear and uncertainty; economic insecurity, arising from disrupted livelihoods and constrained household capacity to sustain education; and institutional insecurity, manifested in weakened organisational capacity and continuity of public services. Digital and informational insecurity may also become consequential where misinformation, communication disruptions or attacks on digital systems affect educational continuity. These dimensions are analytically distinct but empirically interdependent. The central proposition is therefore that insecurity is a dynamic, multidimensional condition that undermines the capacity of individuals and institutions to maintain safety, continuity, functionality and developmental progress.

The Educational Ecosystem

Education globally is receiving intense focus from governments, parents, and communities determined to invest in its development and achieve core learning objectives. A nation's future, civilisation, and progress depend entirely on the quality of its schools. Ultimately, education remains the primary engine for personal growth, poverty eradication, and sustainable socio-economic and political development (Niazi, 2025; Adelakun, 2021). An educational ecosystem extends beyond schools as physical sites to encompass the actors, relationships, resources, institutions and processes that collectively shape educational outcomes. Contemporary systems thinking similarly conceptualises education as a living network of actors, relationships,



routines, resources and infrastructures operating across multiple levels (OECD, 2026). Within this article, the ecosystem comprises inputs (learners, teachers, infrastructure and resources), processes (teaching, learning, administration and assessment), actors (students, teachers, leaders, families and communities), and institutions (schools, universities, ministries and agencies), which interact to produce outcomes including participation, learning, completion, equity and quality. This perspective is important because insecurity affecting one component can generate cascading consequences throughout the system. For example, an attack on a school can trigger closure, displacement, teacher withdrawal, interrupted instruction and diminished community confidence, thereby converting a local security incident into an ecosystem-wide educational disruption.

Theoretical Lens

The article primarily draws on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems perspective, which explains development through dynamic interactions between individuals, their immediate environments and broader social structures. Subsequent development of the theory emphasised the interaction of process, person, context and time, making the framework particularly suitable for analysing changing security conditions (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Applied to educational insecurity, the microsystem captures learners and teachers; the mesosystem encompasses school–family–community relationships; the ecosystem includes educational administration, security agencies and other institutions indirectly shaping schooling; the macrosystem incorporates national political, economic, security and policy structures; while the chronosystem captures the temporal transformation of insecurity. This ecological reading prevents insecurity from being reduced to an isolated school-level event and instead locates educational vulnerability within interacting layers of society.

The framework is complemented by an education-system resilience perspective, which shifts analysis from exposure and vulnerability towards the capacity to anticipate, absorb, adapt and recover from disruption. Recent scholarship identifies resilience as an increasingly important systems-level response to educational disruption, while evidence from conflict-affected settings highlights governance, social resources, knowledge and innovation as important foundations of education-system resilience (Borazon & Chuang, 2023; UNICEF, 2025^a; UNICEF, 2024^c). Thus, the article conceptualises the relationship as:

Ecological exposure → vulnerability → educational disruption → adaptive capacity → resilience → recovery and transformation.

This integrated lens provides the conceptual foundation for examining how Nigeria's metamorphosing insecurity moves across ecological levels and how educational systems can develop capacities to withstand, adapt to and transform in response to persistent disruption.

The Metamorphosis of Insecurity in Nigeria

1. From Conventional Insecurity to Multidimensional Insecurity

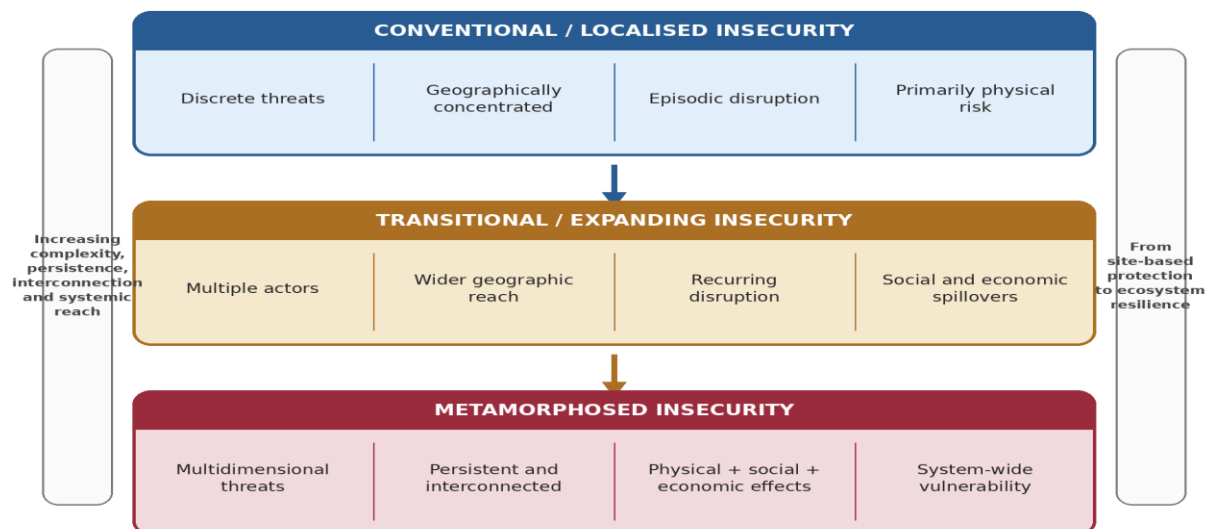
Nigeria's insecurity has undergone a qualitative transformation from relatively identifiable and geographically concentrated episodes of violence towards a more diffuse, persistent and multidimensional security environment. Terrorism and insurgency remain significant, particularly in the North-East, but banditry, kidnapping, communal violence, farmer–herder conflicts and other forms of organised violence increasingly overlap across geographical and

social spaces. UNICEF's assessment of Katsina, Zamfara and Niger States, for example, identifies the simultaneous effects of armed violence, banditry, abductions and communal conflict on communities, livelihoods, displacement and access to education (UNICEF, 2025^o). The significance of this metamorphosis lies in the changing pattern, duration and reach of insecurity. Earlier manifestations could be more readily associated with particular actors or conflict locations; emerging forms are increasingly networked, mobile and capable of producing prolonged disruption beyond the immediate site of violence. Consequently, insecurity now encompasses physical threats alongside psychological, socioeconomic and institutional vulnerabilities. Education is therefore exposed not only when schools are directly attacked, but also when insecurity displaces communities, weakens household livelihoods, interrupts mobility, erodes institutional capacity and generates sustained fear of schooling. The Federal Ministry of Education's 2025 Early Warning Handbook consequently identifies kidnapping, communal clashes, violent extremism and related threats as risks requiring anticipatory protection of schools and their communities (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025).

Earlier Configuration	Emerging Configuration
Relatively localised violence	Networked and multidimensional insecurity
Periodic disruption	Persistent and cumulative disruption
Predominantly physical threats	Physical, psychological and socioeconomic threats
Vulnerability concentrated around conflict sites	System-wide and geographically diffuse vulnerability
Predominantly reactive responses	Increasing need for anticipatory resilience
School-specific consequences	Educational-ecosystem-wide consequences

This transformation changes the analytical question from whether insecurity affects education to how interconnected forms of insecurity propagate through the educational ecosystem.

Figure 1. The Metamorphosis of Insecurity in Nigeria: A Multidimensional Security Landscape



Conceptual transition: localised and episodic threats → persistent, multidimensional and interconnected insecurity

Source: Authors' conceptualisation based on the reviewed literature (2026).



The above Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual transformation of insecurity in Nigeria from predominantly localised and episodic threats towards a more persistent and multidimensional security landscape. The transition reflects increasing geographical reach, multiple forms of insecurity and interconnected social and economic effects. The figure highlights that contemporary insecurity cannot be adequately understood through isolated threat categories. Instead, its cumulative effects create wider and more persistent vulnerabilities across institutions and communities. This transformation provides the conceptual basis for examining education as an interconnected ecosystem rather than as a collection of individual schools.

2. Major Contemporary Manifestations

The contemporary Nigerian security landscape comprises terrorism and insurgency, banditry and kidnapping, communal and farmer–herder conflicts, separatist-related violence, youth and cult-related violence, displacement and associated socioeconomic insecurity. Their educational significance lies in their intersections, rather than their separate existence. Banditry and kidnapping, for instance, can produce school closures, teacher displacement and parental reluctance to send children to school; communal violence can restrict movement and fragment communities; insurgency can destroy infrastructure and displace populations; while socioeconomic insecurity can reduce households' capacity to sustain children's participation. UNICEF reports that insecurity and armed violence remain major drivers of school closures, displacement and educational exclusion in affected northern states (UNICEF, 2025^o). Direct attacks demonstrate the most visible expression of this transformation. In November 2025, 25 girls were reportedly abducted from a school in Kebbi State, while days later children and teachers were abducted from a secondary school in Niger State. Such incidents demonstrate that educational institutions themselves can become sites of targeted violence, transforming the school from a protective social institution into a potential locus of risk.

3. The Convergence of Insecurity

The deeper conceptual significance of Nigeria's insecurity lies in its cumulative and mutually reinforcing effects. Violence can trigger displacement; displacement can reduce household income and disrupt livelihoods; socioeconomic pressure can increase children's vulnerability to absenteeism, child labour and dropout; prolonged educational exclusion can subsequently weaken human-capital development. Similarly, a school attack can generate fear, parental withdrawal, teacher attrition and reduced instructional time, ultimately diminishing educational quality. These pathways demonstrate that insecurity operates through cascading mechanisms rather than isolated events. Thus, the relationship can be represented as follows:

Conflict/violence → displacement → socioeconomic vulnerability → educational disengagement → dropout → reduced human-capital development
and:

School attack → fear and displacement → learner/teacher withdrawal → instructional disruption → institutional weakening → declining educational quality.

The implication is that Nigeria's security challenge has become an educational-system challenge. Addressing its consequences therefore requires moving beyond the protection of physical school facilities towards an ecosystem approach that anticipates interconnected risks, strengthens institutional resilience and protects continuity of learning. This shift provides the basis for examining the broader implications of insecurity for learners, teachers, institutions and educational governance.



Table 1. Manifestations of Insecurity, Educational Exposure, Disruption Pathways and Consequences

Manifestations of insecurity	Educational exposure	Disruption pathways	Likely educational consequences
Insurgency/Violent Extremism	Learners; teachers; school leaders; schools; communities	Attacks; fear; displacement; school closure; restricted mobility	Exclusion; interrupted learning; infrastructure loss; reduced quality
Banditry and Kidnapping	Learners; teachers; families; transport routes; communities	Abduction threats; absenteeism; mobility restrictions; temporary closure	Dropout; teacher attrition; reduced attendance; inequality
Communal Violence	Schools; families; host communities; local institutions	Displacement; insecurity around schools; disrupted attendance and social relations	Learning disruption; exclusion; weakened social cohesion; reduced quality
Displacement	Displaced learners and teachers; host schools; education services	Interrupted schooling; overcrowding; documentation gaps; pressure on resources	Discontinuity; inequitable access; dropout risk; learning loss
Environmental Pressures/Hazards	Schools; infrastructure; learners; teachers; communities	Flooding; damaged facilities; disrupted transport; temporary closure	Interrupted learning; infrastructure damage; unequal access; recovery costs

Source: *Authors' synthesis of the reviewed literature (2026).*

Table 1 above synthesises the principal manifestations of insecurity and their potential pathways into the educational ecosystem. It demonstrates that different security threats expose multiple actors, resources and institutional functions rather than affecting schools in isolation. The table further distinguishes immediate disruption pathways from their broader educational consequences, including exclusion, discontinuity, inequality and reduced quality. Its synthesis highlights the cumulative and interconnected nature of educational vulnerability. Accordingly, insecurity is conceptualised as a systemic condition whose effects can propagate across multiple components of the educational ecosystem.

Implications of the Metamorphosis of Insecurity for the Nigerian Educational Ecosystem

The metamorphosis of insecurity has consequences that extend beyond immediate threats to physical safety. Because education operates through interconnected actors, institutions, resources and processes, disruption in one component can generate cumulative effects across the system. Evidence from northern Nigeria shows that armed violence, banditry, abductions and displacement are already constraining access to schooling, weakening educational continuity and placing additional pressure on affected communities (UNICEF, 2025^a).

1. Educational access and participation

Insecurity directly restricts educational access through school closures, restricted mobility, displacement and fear of attending school. Nigeria recorded 19 attacks on schools in 2022–2023, resulting in the closure of 113 schools in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States (UNICEF, 2024). More recent evidence indicates that insecurity continued to prompt temporary school closures in northwestern states during 2025, while displacement further separated children from established schooling arrangements (UNICEF, 2025^a). The consequences extend beyond temporary interruption. Displaced learners may enter overcrowded host schools with insufficient teachers, materials and remedial support, while repeated movement fragments



educational trajectories. In Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, UNICEF reported that 56% of displaced children were not attending school in 2024, illustrating how insecurity can convert displacement into sustained educational exclusion (UNICEF, 2024^a). Thus, geographical location increasingly becomes a determinant of educational opportunity, with rural and conflict-affected communities facing substantially greater barriers than relatively secure areas.

2. Learners' Safety, Wellbeing and Educational Trajectories

The educational consequences of insecurity also operate through fear, uncertainty and disrupted social relationships. Attacks on schools can discourage parents from sending children to school and cause learners to withdraw from environments perceived as unsafe (UNICEF, 2024^d). Displacement compounds these pressures by removing learners from familiar teachers, peers and communities. Evidence from affected Nigerian states indicates that displaced learners experience fragmented schooling, overcrowded classrooms, difficulty adapting to new environments and inadequate opportunities to recover missed learning (UNICEF, 2025^d). These conditions can affect concentration, participation and continuity without assuming that every learner develops a clinical psychological disorder. The central educational concern is therefore the cumulative disruption of learning trajectories. Where insecurity persists, interrupted schooling can become prolonged disengagement, particularly for learners already facing poverty, displacement or other forms of vulnerability. The educational consequences of insecurity are consequently both immediate and intergenerational.

3. Teachers and School Leaders

Teachers and school leaders are similarly exposed but remain comparatively underexamined in discussions of educational insecurity. Threats to personal safety can discourage teachers from working in high-risk locations, contribute to staff shortages and increase pressure on those who remain. UNICEF's 2025 evidence identifies inadequate teacher availability as a continuing challenge in conflict-affected northeastern Nigeria; only 29% of schools in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe were reported to have teachers meeting minimum qualification standards in 2024 (UNICEF, 2025^d). For school leaders, insecurity expands managerial responsibility. Principals and administrators must increasingly balance instructional leadership with risk assessment, emergency preparedness, communication with security agencies, community mobilisation and protection of learners and staff. Nigeria's *Early Warning Handbook* explicitly recognises kidnapping, communal clashes, violent extremism and other threats as risks requiring coordinated school-level anticipation and response (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025). Insecurity therefore transforms educational leadership from primarily instructional and administrative work into a more complex form of security-sensitive institutional management.

4. Teaching, Learning and Educational Quality

Insecurity disrupts educational quality through a cascading sequence: reduced instructional time → incomplete curriculum coverage → weakened assessment and feedback → learning discontinuity → poorer educational outcomes. School closures interrupt formal instruction, while displacement may place learners in overcrowded classrooms with insufficient learning materials and limited remedial provision (UNICEF, 2025). Where conventional schooling becomes unsafe or inaccessible, emergency, community-based and digital approaches can provide alternative pathways. UNICEF's 2025 response in crisis-affected northern Nigeria included blended learning, digital platforms and community-based interventions to maintain continuity for learners in remote and displaced communities. However, such alternatives cannot automatically compensate for lost instructional time because connectivity, devices,



teacher capacity and learning resources remain unevenly distributed. Consequently, insecurity can widen the gap between nominal access to education and meaningful access to quality learning.

5. Educational Infrastructure and Resources

Insecurity threatens classrooms and other educational assets through direct destruction, occupation, looting and prolonged non-use. The consequences extend to laboratories, libraries, ICT facilities, learning materials, transportation and residential facilities. International evidence confirms that attacks on education can involve damage to educational infrastructure and military use of schools, while Nigeria's 2022–2023 experience demonstrates the continuing exposure of schools to armed violence (GCPEA, 2024). The significance of infrastructure loss is therefore not confined to replacement costs. Destroyed or inaccessible facilities represent lost educational investment and future opportunity. Reconstruction also diverts scarce public resources from teacher development, instructional materials, maintenance and educational expansion towards recovery. Infrastructure insecurity consequently weakens both present educational delivery and the system's capacity for long-term development.

6. Educational Governance and Institutional Functioning

Insecurity also alters how education is governed. School closures, population displacement and emergency responses complicate enrolment planning, teacher deployment, budgeting, supervision and resource allocation. Education authorities must redistribute resources towards affected communities while maintaining services elsewhere, often under conditions of uncertainty and constrained financing. UNICEF's evidence from northern Nigeria shows that crisis responses increasingly require coordination among government, communities and development partners to maintain learning continuity and school safety (UNICEF, 2025). The governance implication is significant: insecurity reduces the predictability on which conventional educational planning depends. Effective management therefore requires risk-sensitive planning, reliable information, decentralised response capacity and stronger coordination between educational and security institutions. Accountability must likewise encompass not only educational performance but also preparedness, protection and continuity.

7. Equity and Social Justice

The distribution of these consequences is highly unequal. Rural communities, displaced populations, poor households and schools located in high-risk areas generally possess fewer resources with which to absorb prolonged disruption. Girls may face additional barriers where insecurity increases concerns about safety, mobility and household vulnerability. Across West and Central Africa, prolonged school closures associated with violence have been linked to widening gender inequalities, with girls particularly vulnerable to permanent disengagement from education (UNICEF, 2025). In Nigeria, this creates a potentially self-reinforcing cycle: insecurity → displacement and poverty → reduced educational participation → weaker learning and human-capital formation → greater socioeconomic vulnerability. Educational insecurity is therefore not simply an access problem; it is a social justice problem. Unless protective and recovery measures prioritise the most exposed communities, insecurity may reproduce existing geographical, socioeconomic and gender inequalities and progressively fragment the national education system.

Collectively, insecurity should consequently be understood as a systemic determinant of educational opportunity and institutional performance, not merely an external threat requiring



physical protection. Its effects penetrate access, participation, wellbeing, teaching, infrastructure, governance and equity simultaneously. This reinforces the need for an educational response centred on anticipation, institutional resilience and coordinated ecosystem-wide protection rather than predominantly reactive security measures.

From Vulnerability to Resilience: The Way Forward

The persistence and changing character of insecurity require a shift from reactive protection to anticipatory educational resilience. Evidence from Nigeria indicates that communities continue to develop alternative pathways for sustaining learning despite insecurity, while recent resilience research emphasises anticipation, coping, adaptation and transformation as interconnected capacities of education systems (Borazon & Chuang, 2023; UNICEF, 2025^a). The objective, therefore, should not be to eliminate every risk before education can function, but to strengthen the capacity of the educational ecosystem to anticipate threats, maintain essential functions, adapt to disruption and recover without reproducing existing inequalities.

1. Reframing Educational Security

Educational security should move beyond the physical protection of school buildings towards the protection of the entire educational ecosystem. This includes learners, teachers, school leaders, families, communities, infrastructure, information systems and institutional processes. Nigeria's National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools already provides a basis for comprehensive prevention and response at national, state, local-government and school levels. The conceptual shift proposed here is therefore from safe schools to resilient education systems: a school cannot be considered secure when its surrounding community is displaced, teachers are unavailable, learners cannot travel safely or institutional services cannot continue.

2. Preventive and Anticipatory Security

Prevention should be grounded in risk intelligence rather than crisis reaction. School-level risk assessments should identify locally specific threats, vulnerabilities and response capacities, supported by risk mapping, emergency preparedness and functional early-warning mechanisms. This is particularly important because UNICEF found in 2024 that only 37% of schools across ten Nigerian states had early-warning systems capable of identifying threats such as school attacks (UNICEF, 2024^b). The Federal Ministry of Education's *Early Warning Handbook* similarly promotes recognition of warning signs and timely action against kidnapping, communal conflict, violent extremism and other threats (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025). Community-based intelligence should complement, rather than replace, formal security structures, while conflict-sensitive education planning should ensure that school expansion, transportation, boarding arrangements and resource deployment do not inadvertently increase risk exposure.

3. Institutional Resilience

Resilient educational institutions require the capacity to anticipate → absorb → adapt → recover → transform. This involves institutional continuity plans, alternative learning arrangements, secure communication channels, decentralised decision-making and prepared leadership teams. Recent research on education-system resilience in conflict-affected settings identifies governance, social resources, knowledge and innovation as important foundations for strengthening systemic resilience (Borazon & Chuang, 2023). In Nigeria, this means



enabling schools and education authorities to maintain core teaching and administrative functions during disruption rather than relying principally on ad hoc emergency responses.

4. Whole-of-Community Approach

Educational security cannot be sustainably achieved through school-based interventions alone. Effective resilience requires coordinated action among schools, families, communities, traditional institutions, security agencies, government and civil society. Nigeria's recent experience demonstrates the value of community participation: in 2025, thousands of School-Based Management Committee members received training in safe-school monitoring, resource mobilisation and resilience approaches (UNICEF, 2025^d). Such participation can strengthen local ownership, improve information flows and connect formal security arrangements with community knowledge. The community should consequently be regarded not merely as a beneficiary of school protection but as an active resilience resource.

5. Teacher and Learner Support

Resilience must also protect the people who sustain educational continuity. Teacher safety, professional support and psychosocial assistance should be integrated into emergency preparedness, alongside safe transportation where necessary and flexible arrangements for learners affected by displacement. UNICEF's 2025 response demonstrates the feasibility of combining teacher training, psychosocial support, community participation and alternative learning approaches in crisis-affected areas. Displaced learners should receive structured reintegration, learning recovery and continuity support so that temporary disruption does not become permanent exclusion (UNICEF, 2025^d).

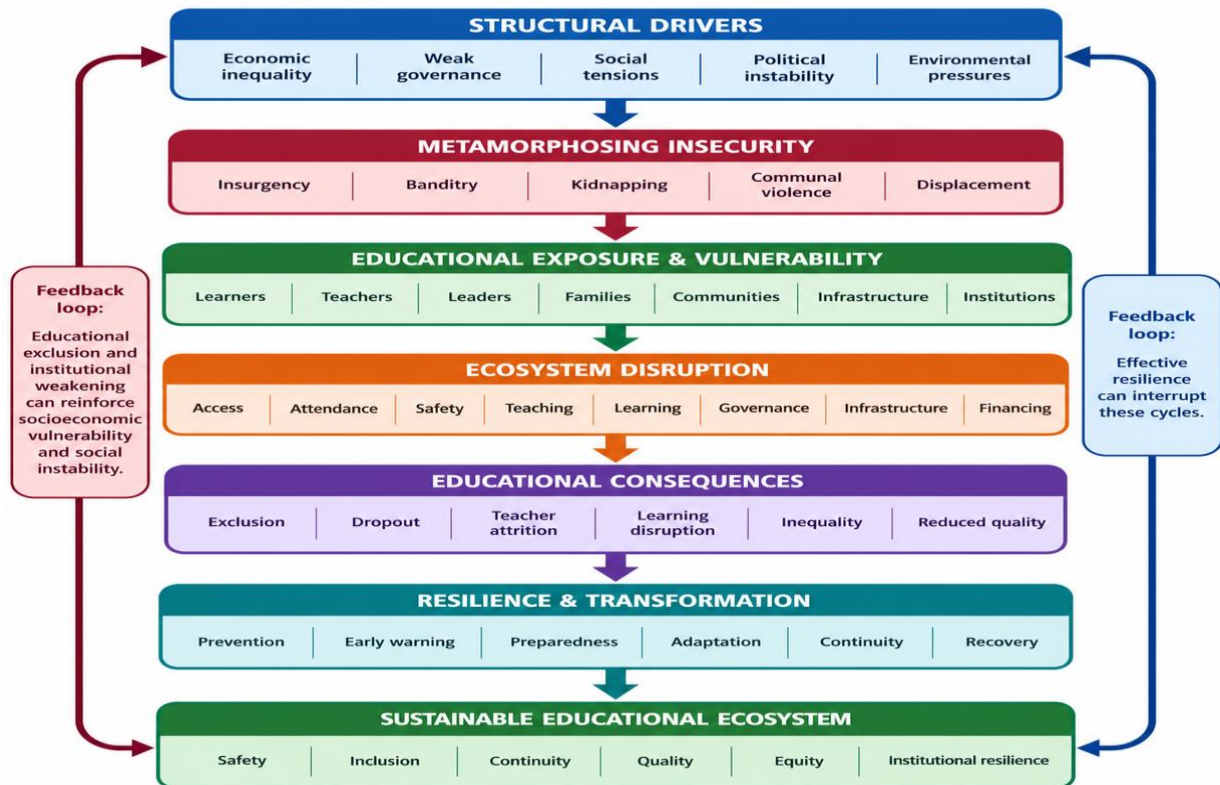
6. Policy and Governance Reforms

Finally, resilience requires coherent multilevel governance and sustained financing. Federal, state and local authorities should align education-sensitive security planning with school-safety standards, risk information, emergency financing and measurable accountability. The National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools provides an institutional foundation, but implementation requires clearer coordination, reliable monitoring and evaluation, adequate funding and locally responsive planning. The way forward is therefore not another isolated security programme but a governance architecture that embeds risk anticipation, continuity and resilience within routine educational planning. Such an approach can transform insecurity from a recurring source of educational disruption into a catalyst for stronger, more adaptive and more equitable educational institutions.

Proposed Educational Ecosystem Insecurity-Resilience Framework (EEIRF)

The Educational Ecosystem Insecurity-Resilience Framework (EEIRF) is proposed as the article's principal conceptual contribution. It extends the preceding ecological and resilience perspectives by explaining how Nigeria's changing security environment moves from structural conditions to educational vulnerability, ecosystem disruption and, ultimately, resilience and transformation. Rather than treating insecurity as an external event with a direct effect on schooling, the framework conceptualises insecurity as a dynamic process whose effects are mediated by the characteristics and adaptive capacity of the educational ecosystem.

Figure 2. Educational Ecosystem Insecurity-Resilience Framework (EEIRF)



Source: Authors' conceptualisation based on the reviewed literature (2026).

Figure 2 above presents the Educational Ecosystem Insecurity–Resilience Framework (EEIRF), the principal conceptual contribution of this article. The framework proposes that structural drivers generate or intensify forms of insecurity that expose interconnected educational actors, resources and institutions to vulnerability. These exposures can generate cascading disruptions across access, attendance, safety, teaching, learning, governance, infrastructure and financing. The framework positions resilience as a dynamic capacity involving prevention, early warning, preparedness, adaptation, continuity and recovery rather than a return to pre-crisis conditions. Feedback loops further demonstrate that educational exclusion and institutional weakening may reinforce wider vulnerability, whereas effective resilience can interrupt these cycles. The framework begins with structural drivers of insecurity, including socioeconomic inequality, weak governance, social tensions, political instability and environmental pressures. These conditions interact to produce metamorphosing forms of insecurity, including insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, communal violence and displacement. Their intensity, duration and geographical spread determine the degree to which educational actors and institutions become exposed. The third dimension is educational exposure and vulnerability, encompassing learners, teachers, school leaders, families, communities, infrastructure and educational institutions. Vulnerability is not uniform: it reflects the interaction between exposure to insecurity and the resources available to prevent, withstand or recover from disruption. This leads to the fourth dimension, ecosystem disruption, through which insecurity affects access, attendance, safety, teaching, learning, governance, infrastructure and educational financing. The resulting



consequences include exclusion, dropout, teacher attrition, interrupted learning, declining quality and widening inequality.

The final dimension is resilience and transformation. Educational systems require capacities for prevention, early warning, preparedness, adaptation, continuity and recovery. Resilience is therefore conceived not simply as returning education to its pre-crisis condition, but as developing stronger institutional arrangements capable of functioning under changing security conditions. This interpretation is consistent with systems-oriented scholarship that views educational resilience as a capacity involving adaptation across interconnected organisational levels (Borazon & Chuang, 2023). Importantly, the EEIRF is dynamic rather than linear. Feedback mechanisms connect educational consequences back to the structural conditions that generate vulnerability. Prolonged educational exclusion, for instance, can reduce human-capital formation, intensify socioeconomic marginalisation and weaken future social cohesion, potentially reinforcing conditions associated with insecurity. Conversely, effective resilience can interrupt these feedback loops by sustaining educational participation, strengthening institutional capacity and supporting community stability.

The framework consequently advances a central proposition: the educational consequences of insecurity are determined not only by the severity of security threats but also by the vulnerability and resilience of the ecosystem through which those threats are experienced. The way forward therefore requires simultaneous attention to security, educational, institutional and community levels rather than isolated protection of school facilities.

Conceptual Contribution

The EEIRF therefore makes three principal contributions:

1. First, it reconceptualises insecurity as an ecosystem-level phenomenon rather than an external disturbance to schools.
2. Second, it explains the cascading pathways through which different forms of insecurity generate educational consequences.
3. Third, it connects vulnerability with anticipatory resilience, providing a basis for moving Nigerian educational policy from reactive school protection towards systemic prevention, adaptation and transformation.

Discussion and Conceptual Propositions

The Educational Ecosystem Insecurity–Resilience Framework (EEIRF) conceptualises insecurity as a systemic process rather than a discrete event. Its central argument is that educational disruption is shaped not only by the occurrence or severity of insecurity but also by interactions among exposure, vulnerability, institutional capacity, and resilience. This interpretation is consistent with the ecological view that educational outcomes emerge through interdependent actors, relationships, resources and institutional contexts (OECD, 2026; Rosa & Tudge, 2013).

The framework further suggests that insecurity becomes educationally consequential when recurrent threats exceed the capacity of schools and surrounding systems to anticipate, absorb and adapt to disruption. Evidence from Nigeria demonstrates that armed violence, banditry,



abductions and communal conflict can simultaneously affect schooling, displacement, social cohesion and access to basic services (UNICEF, 2025^a). Thus, vulnerability should be understood as relational and cumulative rather than inherent to particular schools or populations. Where institutional and community capacities are stronger, similar threats may produce less severe and shorter-lived disruption. This interpretation accords with educational resilience scholarship, which emphasises the interaction between learners, teachers, institutions and their environments (Borazon & Chuang, 2023).

The framework therefore advances six conceptual propositions:

Proposition 1: The greater the multidimensionality and persistence of insecurity, the greater the likelihood that disruption will extend beyond individual institutions to the wider educational ecosystem.

Proposition 2: The educational effects of insecurity are mediated by institutional capacity, community support and the availability of adaptive mechanisms.

Proposition 3: Persistent insecurity transforms educational vulnerability from an episodic condition into a structural characteristic of affected educational systems.

Proposition 4: Educational inequality is likely to intensify where insecurity interacts with pre-existing socioeconomic and geographical disadvantages.

Proposition 5: Institutional resilience moderates the relationship between insecurity and educational disruption by strengthening the capacity to anticipate, absorb, adapt and recover.

Proposition 6: Anticipatory, ecosystem-based security approaches are more likely to sustain educational continuity than predominantly reactive responses. Nigeria's Early Warning Handbook explicitly emphasises recognising risks and acting before threats escalate, reinforcing this proposition (Federal Ministry of Education [FME], 2025).

Collectively, these propositions reposition educational security from protecting physical school sites to strengthening the resilience of the interconnected educational ecosystem. The framework consequently provides a basis for future empirical testing across regions, school types and levels of insecurity.

Conclusion

This article argues that insecurity in Nigeria has shifted from relatively discrete, episodic threats to a multidimensional, increasingly persistent condition with systemic implications for education. Its consequences extend beyond direct threats to physical safety to encompass access, participation, teaching and learning continuity, institutional functioning, social cohesion and educational equity. Recent evidence confirms that armed violence, banditry, abductions and communal conflict can simultaneously disrupt schooling, displace communities and constrain access to essential services. The analysis further establishes that educational disruption does not occur through a single pathway. It emerges through interconnected relationships among learners, teachers, families, communities, infrastructure, institutions and wider governance structures. Vulnerability is consequently uneven: communities with greater socioeconomic disadvantage, geographical exposure and weaker institutional capacity are less able to absorb and recover from recurrent shocks. Conversely, resilience depends on the capacity of the educational ecosystem to anticipate risks, adapt to changing conditions and sustain essential functions during disruption, consistent with contemporary educational resilience scholarship.



The implication is a necessary reconceptualization of educational security in Nigeria. Protection must move beyond predominantly reactive responses towards anticipatory, coordinated and ecosystem-wide resilience, including early warning, preparedness, continuity planning and adaptive institutional capacity. Nigeria's 2025 Early Warning Handbook reinforces the importance of recognising emerging risks and acting before they escalate. Ultimately, strengthening educational resilience is not only a security imperative but a prerequisite for sustainable educational development, social stability and equitable human-capital development in Nigeria.

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