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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### Health Seeking Behavior as a Predictor of Adolescent's Security Consciousness

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#### Abstract

Nigeria is witnessing a disturbing rise of violence occasioned by religious, political, economic, cultural, and social motives. The incidence of violent crimes has created an unimaginable insecurity situation in the country, and the trend is increasing daily. Violent insecurity ranges from kidnapping, rape, armed robbery, terrorism, banditry, and assassinations. Meanwhile, the citizens, especially the younger ones, are caught in the center of these violent situations as they are either used to commit crimes or fall victims of violent crimes. Thus, the primary purpose of this study was to examine health-seeking behavior as a factor that could predict security consciousness among adolescents. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. Two hundred samples randomly pooled from public tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria, participated in the study. The participants completed self-report measures of security consciousness questionnaire and health-seeking behavior scale. A simple regression model established a statistically significant association between HSB and security consciousness among adolescents. The study concludes that health-seeking behavior is an essential determinant of security consciousness. The practical implication of the study is discussed.

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#### Introduction:-

The nature of insecurity at the global level is changing rapidly (Omonijo et al., 2017). There has been an increasing trend of security challenges across the universe, and Nigeria as a Nation is not exempted. The security situation in Nigeria has become enormous and embarrassing to the government (Robert-Okah, 2014). The incidence of violent crime has continued to take a toll in Nigeria over the last three decades (Abiodun et al., 2021). In recent years, Nigeria has witnessed unprecedented security challenges occasioned by the activities of militants in the south-south region, kidnapers in the southeast, violent armed robbery in almost all parts of the country, political assassination, ritual killings, Boko Haram in some parts of the northern region especially northeast, and most recently the activities of the bandits (Udeh, 2013).

Extensive literature has been devoted to the security situations and safety issues in Nigeria (Achumba & Ighomereho, 2013; Akpor-Robaro & Lanre-Babalola, 2018; Aleyomi & Nwagwu, 2020; Dambazau, 2014; Hassan, 2014; Igwe, 2020; Oyinloye, 2019; Uzodike & Maiangwa, 2012; Yahaya et al., 2018). Nigeria has experienced an upsurge in violent activities that threaten and endanger its national security (Okedion, 2021). The growing insecurity in the country implies the presence or anxiety of threat to life and property and an unconducive environment for the people

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to pursue their legitimate interest within the society (Robert-Okah, 2014). The Nigerian society is currently witnessing a disturbing trend of insecurity implicated in the continuous upsurge in violent attacks on individuals, religious, and government institutions. Violent criminality and insecurity are pervasive across Nigeria as terrorists, ethnic militias, armed robbers, political assassins, kidnappers, and bandits have gone on the rampage (Aghedo, 2015). The problem of violence in Nigeria has become more worrisome, especially when the security agencies are engulfed in violent situations (Odoma, 2014), thus escalating the trend of insecurity.

Previous studies have implicated young people in the scourge of insecurities (Otabor & Olaniyi, 2011). Perhaps, it could be argued that young people are at the center of violent insecurities because they are used to perpetrate crime or fall victims to criminal situations. Security consciousness in this study refers to the state of being aware, knowing, and the ability to recognize and avoid acts capable of causing harm to oneself and others. In other words, a lack of security consciousness denotes total ignorance of the scourge of insecurities in the country, which have accounted for the loss of many lives and properties and affected the socio-economic development of Nigeria. Perhaps, safety awareness has been associated with increased safety behavior (Uzuntarla et al., 2020). Thus, the present study seeks to examine the relationship between health-seeking behavior and security consciousness.

Health-seeking behavior is a fundamental prerequisite to maintaining a healthy lifestyle and peaceful co-existence. Health-seeking behavior is conceptualized as an approach that enables individuals to increase well-being and maintain safety and good health. HSB promotes consciousness, facilitates preventive motives, decreases morbidities, and improves the quality of life. The frequency and pervasiveness of crime in contemporary Nigeria is well documented (Adeyemi et al., 2021; Adzande & Gyuse, 2017; Ajala & Owabumoye, 2018; Ajayi & Ajayi, 2014; Akanji, 2015; Badiora & Abegunde, 2015; Ibrahim & Ahmad, 2020; Nwankwo & James, 2016; Okoli & Agada, 2014; Ukachukwu & Naetor, 2020). However, a health-seeking lifestyle is a multi-dimensional pattern of self-initiated feelings and behaviors to ensure an individual's safety, self-actualization, and healthy living. Perhaps, HSB entails avoiding participation in an act capable of hurting others and oneself, reporting suspected danger, avoiding vulnerable areas, and complying with security guidelines.

Consequently, security consciousness is considered an essential component in well-being. Health-promoting behavior among adolescents has become a research focus worldwide (Wang et al., 2009). Adolescence is the period of dynamic transition from childhood to adulthood and is associated with rapid changes in body, mind, and social relationships (Wang et al., 2009). Adolescents are more vulnerable to the incidence of violent insecurity. Most youngsters engage in inappropriate health behavior such as joining cultism and being used to perpetrate crime and be less conscious of their surroundings. The primary purpose of the current study is to explore health-seeking behavior as a factor that could account for the variance in security consciousness among adolescents. Thus, it is hypothesized that health-seeking behavior will significantly predict security consciousness among adolescents.

### **Method:-**

The research adopted a cross-sectional survey. The population of this study includes young people within the age range of 18 – 35 years. They were randomly selected from three public tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria. The samples constitute males and females, comprising 122 males and 117 females. They were approached between July and August 2021. They were asked to participate in a study to ascertain their understanding of the prevalence of violent crimes in the country. However, they were informed that participation in the survey was voluntary and entailed no harm. In all, 223 persons consented to participate in the study and were given the study's instrument. In total, 200 copies of the questionnaires were returned acceptably. However, other copies were either filled incorrectly or unreturned. Thus, the study made use of the 200 completed forms.

### **Measures:-**

Safety consciousness was assessed using a 15-item Security Consciousness Questionnaire (SCQ) designed to determine a person's level of security consciousness with demographic information. The instrument is answered in a four-point Likert response type scale ranging from strongly disagree to agree strongly. The higher scores determine high-security consciousness, and the lower score meaning low-security consciousness.

HSB was measured with a questionnaire designed to ascertain the general health-seeking attitude of the participants. The 15-item scale was rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = Never, 5 = Always). A higher score on this scale

indicates positive health-seeking behavior. The instrument was validated following a pilot study, and .87 Cronbach's alpha was obtained.

### Result:-

The data collected with the measurement scales were subjected to statistical manipulation to test the study's hypothesis stating that health-seeking behavior would significantly predict security consciousness among adolescents. A simple regression analysis was conducted, and the result revealed a statistically significant effect of health-seeking behavior on the participant's security consciousness at  $F(1,198) = 63.063, P < .000$ . The adjusted  $R^2$  showed that the independent variable contributed 67.8% of the variation in security consciousness among the adolescents.

**Table 1:-** Table showing the result of the simple regression analysis conducted to determine the influence of HSB on security consciousness.

95% CI for B								
B	LL	UL	SEB	$\beta$	$R^2$	t	Sig	
Constant	2.35	2.08	2.61	.13		17.58	.000	
HSB	-.47	-.59	-.39	.06	-.47	.678	-7.83	.000

Note. HSB- Health Seeking Behavior; B = Unstandardized regression coefficient; CI = Confident Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit; SEB = Standardized error of the coefficient;  $\beta$  = Standardized coefficient;  $R^2$  = Coefficient of determination. \* $P < .000$ .

### Discussion:-

The present study was conducted to determine the influence of HSB on the security consciousness of adolescents in Nigeria. Based on the study's objective, it was assumed that HSB would significantly account for the variance in the security consciousness of the adolescents. Thus, in testing this assumption, a simple regression model was employed for data analysis, and the result indicated a positive association between HSB and security consciousness. Statistically, the adjusted  $R^2$  showed that the independent variable accounted for 67.8% of the variation in the interaction between HSB and security consciousness. The result corroborates a previous study (e.g., Ugwuegede et al. 2019), which found a correlation between self-esteem and security consciousness. This outcome could be attributed to the relevance associated with HSB.

Health consciousness corresponds to self-awareness about one's health and the willingness to engage in health and wellness-promoting behaviors (Michaelidou & Hassan, 2008). Accordingly, people who scored high in health-seeking behavior enthusiastically seek information about improving their health and avoiding actions and situations capable of compromising their health (Dutta & Feng, 2007; Iversen & Kraft, 2006). More so, adolescents with high health-seeking attitudes may show more positive attitudes about safety, self-care, and more willingness to avoid harm, and accordingly have improved overall well-being than those with less health-seeking behavior. Such healthier lifestyles are implicated in total avoidance of dangerous situations, reporting suspected danger, and adhering to safety protocols.

### Implications of the Study

The findings of this study indicate that an individual's health consciousness mediates the trend of insecurity in Nigeria and the susceptibility of the adolescent. The study's findings also have implications for the security agencies, policymakers, non-governmental agencies, and other stakeholders interested in shaping young people's vulnerability to the incidence of violence insecurities.

### Conclusion and Recommendations:-

The study aimed to gain insight into the role of health-seeking behavior on adolescents' consciousness about the incidence and prevalence of violence insecurities bedeviling Nigeria in the present time. Consequently, the analysis conducted on the data collected from the participants indicated that health-seeking behavior is a significant predictor

of security consciousness. Thus, the present study contributes to the literature by revealing the association between health consciousness and safety consciousness. The study concludes that health-seeking behavior is an essential psychological phenomenon capable of shaping adolescents' alertness to their safety relating to violent situations. The study recommends that policies and decisions that aim to enhance adolescent's health consciousness should be incorporated into programs and policies intended for young people's well-being. This is particularly important because health consciousness is nurtured over time. More so, future research should endeavor to employ more comprehensive samples and widen the scope.

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