
INSECURITY AS A THREAT ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Insecurity stifles the activities and exchanges that facilitate progress and prosperity and has also exacerbated poverty and unemployment. The long-term effect could include stunted economic growth, and further marginalization of affected communities. The persistent insecurity threat experienced in Nigeria is not only a human tragedy but also has a devastating impact on overall socio economic development. Therefore, the primary purpose of this paper is to assess insecurity as a threat on Socio-economic Development in Nigeria with specific focus on the causes, nature and effects. Data for the paper are gathered from secondary sources that comprise published and unpublished texts and presented qualitatively. The data are analysed thematically using content analysis. It is revealed among others that insecurity in Nigeria is being caused by many factors ranging from bad leadership, unemployment and poverty among others. It is manifested in the forms of ethno-religious crises, insurgency and kidnapping among others which negatively affect the overall socio-economic development. To combat this multifaceted menace in the country, this study recommends a range of measures to address the problem mitigating security to include: strengthening the security forces, community led policing initiatives by engaging the community members to fight the insecurity, initiating and implementing strategies that center on human development, equitable resource distribution and giving priority to the most critical sectors of the economy such as manufacturing and agriculture among others.

Keywords: Insecurity, Threat, Socio-Economic, Development

Introduction

Globally, insecurity is a major threat to overall development. Therefore, peace and tranquility is fundamental ingredient for socio-economic development. The provision of security is one of the most fundamental conditions for human existence anywhere in the world. Without an

environment conducive to trade, industry and production, development remains out of reach, as unrest and insecurity stifle the activities and exchange that fuel progress and prosperity.

In Nigeria insecurity has remained a reoccurring phenomenon that has continued to threaten the socio-economic fabric of the country's development. Insecurity in Nigeria has continued to pose a threat to human lives and properties, distort business activities and dampen local and foreign investors, thereby leading to a deficit in the country's social and economic growth and development. Thus, without security, the state is bound to experience great difficulty in harnessing its human and material resources towards meaningful development and the promotion of the general well-being of the people (Madobi, 2022 cited in Adams, Onyedinefu and Ajala, 2023).

In a similar direction, Abubakar, Sule and Tijjani (2023) stressed that Nigeria has frequently suffered security challenges which were carried out mostly by militants in the south-south region, brutalization and massacres by kidnapers and the Indigenous People of Biafra(IPOB) members in the South East, frequent attacks on travelers, displacement of village settlements, and incessant abductions by the kidnapers in the North Central and North Western parts of Nigeria, the heinous and belligerent killings of people by the Boko Haram/ISWAP in the North East and, violent armed robbery cases in almost every part of the country, political assassination and ritual killings among others. The spate of terrorist activities that breeds insecurity has threatened the economic progress of the nation over the years, specifically when the Boko Haram sect was declared a terrorist group. This has led to significant loss of human capital, closure of businesses and increased level of poverty mostly in the affected` areas of the country (Nkwatcho & Nathanie, 2018).

The effect of insecurity on social and economic development in Nigeria in general has been devastating. The insecurity situation has damaged the Nigeria's integrity in the eyes of the international community. Thus, Nigeria has no longer been described as a friendly, welcoming and suitable business environment for foreign and international investors and for smooth take up of business activities.

In spite of the efforts of the government in tackling the menace based on the constitutional role (as enshrined in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution), Stewart (2004) cited in Ezeajughu (2021), stated that insecurity has still been persisted in different forms and that its economic cost of is

enormous. It presents itself in the destruction of few available infrastructures needed for the industrial growth and development of the nation. It is obvious that we cannot develop without sustainable peace which is prerequisite for growth and development. Also, with the huge outlay of government resources spent on curbing the menace of insecurity and the attendant destruction of the few existing infrastructure, one can assume that the challenges that insecurity posed to development is magnificent.

Therefore, the pertinent questions are: what are the causes and nature of insecurity in Nigeria? What are the effects or implications of insecurity to the socio-economic development in the country? What measures need to be taken to deal with the negative trend? The objectives of the paper are in line with the questions raised. It is also assumed that the insecurity situation in the country which manifested in different forms is caused by multiple factors. It is also assumed that insecurity remains a major threat to socio-economic development in Nigeria. Thus, in light of the foregoing, this paper focuses on insecurity as a threat to socio-economic development in Nigeria especially from 2023 to date (2024). This is a period that the country has witnessed different forms of insecurity.

Conceptual Review

Concept of insecurity

In the first place, security is the freedom from danger and threat to a nation's ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and legitimate interest to enable it improve the well-being of its citizens (Umaru et al., 2015). It is also a situation where every citizen in a country can go about their daily activities without fear or any form of threat to lives and belongings (Igbuzor, 2011).

To this end, Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013) see security as efforts by a nation to contain any forms of aggression and crime in order to enhance growth and overall development.

Therefore, insecurity could be seen as the absence of security. It is a condition where vulnerability to harm, loss of life, property or livelihood exists (Achumba et al, 2013). This is characterized by vulnerability of an individual or group to danger or harm against which they cannot take defensive action

Achumba et al (2013) defines insecurity from two perspectives. Firstly, insecurity is the state of being open or subject to danger or threat of danger, where danger is the condition of being susceptible to harm or injury. Secondly insecurity is the state of being exposed to risk or anxiety, where anxiety is a vague unpleasant emotion that is experienced in anticipation of some misfortune. Similarly, Lesmore (2022) defined insecurity as a breach of peace and security; whether historical, religious, ethnic, regional, civil, social, economic, and political, that contributes to recurring conflicts, and leads to wanton destruction of lives and property.

For the purpose of this paper, insecurity is conceptualized as any form of disruption or threat to the social, political, economic or cultural stability and well-being of a community. This disruption can manifest in the forms of ethno-religious conflict, political and civil unrest, kidnapping and insurgency among others that can lead to loss of lives and destruction of properties with far reaching consequences.

Socio- Economic Development

In the words of Abah and Nwokwu (2017), development is a positive change and transformation in social, economic, political and cultural conditions of the society. However, socio-economic development refers to the process of social and economic transformation in a society (Ewetan and Urhie, 2014). Socio-economic development is measured by some indicators such as GDP, life expectancy, literacy level, levels of employment, rate of investment, level of production, among others. Mondri (n.d) stressed that changes in less tangible factors are also considered such as personal dignity, freedom of association, personal safety and freedom from fear of physical harm, and extent of participation in civil society.

Therefore, socio economic development as used in this paper generally refers to a process of improvement in a variety of ways that has influence on all aspects of human life. It comprises freedom and free movement, improved level of production, increased in investment (domestic and foreign), high rate of employment and poverty reduction among others.

Methodology

Data for the study were collected obtained through secondary sources. Secondary data included reports related to insecurity in Nigeria, articles, periodicals and other online (internet) resources. The study also utilised the descriptive style as it built on the findings of already existing works

about emerging security threats in the country. The data are presented qualitatively and analysed on the basis of themes and sub-themes using content analysis. The themes comprise causes of insecurity, nature of insecurity and the effects of insecurity on socio-economic development in the country.

Discussion of Findings

In this section, we made attempts to discuss the causes, nature and effects of insecurity on socio-economic development in Nigeria.

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

There are various factors responsible for the insecurity situation in the country. The major causes of insecurity in Nigeria are inter alia:

Bad Governance: Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999 and there is good governance when there is transparency, accountability, inclusive participation, rule of law, political will to protect fundamental human rights of people by government in power. However, it is rather regrettable that in spite of the abundant human and material resources at her disposal, the country's ratings in recent time on indicators of development, governance and corruption have become a matter of serious concern. The Nigerian judicial system is very weak that criminals go to court and walk away free without prosecution. This gives a sense of insecurity to Nigerians.

Also, corruption has become the bane of Nigerian development as it is seen in every facets of life of an average Nigerian. In 2019, Transparency International placed Nigeria on 14th position amongst 198 countries in Corruption Perspective Index (CPI), with a score of 26 out of 100 (O' Neill, 2021). It is believed that bad governance which deprives majority of their entitlements and other wholesome expectations from government is partly responsible for motivating people to engage in heinous criminal activities. It is a well-known maxim that states that meaningful development cannot take place in an atmosphere riddled with insecurity.

Unemployment and Poverty: Youth's unemployment and poverty have contributed to the rising cases of violent conflict in Nigeria. This is because of the failure of successive administration to address those challenges. The degree with which unemployed youths, graduates inclusive, are roaming about the street is alarming. These unemployed youths at present employ themselves by

engaging in illegal activities such as kidnapping, robbery, child abduction, and other nefarious activities. As a result of the high level of unemployment and poverty among Nigerians, especially the youths, they are adversely attracted to violent crime (Adagba, et al, 2012).

Porous Borders: Porous borders constitute a challenge to combating insecurity in Nigeria. The country has a land border of 4,047 km with the neighbouring Republics of Benin, Niger, Chad and Cameroon with most of it physically unmanned, hence, it is made vulnerable to criminal activities to utilise. In 2014, the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) disclosed that the country had over 1400 illegal as opposed to only 86 legal entry points along the borders (Cable News, 2014). A conservative estimate indicates over 250 footpaths from Nigeria's Borno, Adamawa and Benue states lead into Cameroon (Oluwole, 2021). These hidden tracks provide unfettered passage to insurgents and smuggling of into Nigeria. Weapons are freely moved through the borders by the criminals without any hindrance or challenge from our security personnel.

Weak Security System/Architecture: This is a major contributory factor to the level of insecurity in Nigeria, and this can be attributed to a number of factors which include inadequate funding of the security agencies, lack of modern equipment both in weaponry and training, poor welfare of security personnel, and inadequate personnel (Achumba et al. 2013). According to Olonisakin (2008) the police-population ratio in Nigeria is falls below the standard set by the United Nations. The implication of this is that Nigeria is grossly under policed and this partly explains the inability of the Nigerian Police Force to effectively combat crimes and criminality in the country. In addition, some of the security personnel are corrupt and this is compounded by the fact that they lack the expertise and sophisticated weaponry to act proactively in insecurity situations. Also sometimes they are influenced by ethno-religious sentiments interests. This makes them to sabotage security systems in place, leaving the people vulnerable to attack (Agogbua, Mgbatogu & Nzewi, 2022).

Therefore, insecurity in the country is caused by many factors as discussed above. However, other causes include illiteracy or lack of access to education, extreme religion belief (fanatism), lack of synergy among the security personnel in the area of gathering and utilizing intelligence among others.

Nature of Insecurity in Nigeria

There are several security challenges that serve as cogs in the wheel of progress in Nigeria which include the ethno-religious crisis, kidnapping, Boko Haram Insurgency especially in the Northeast, armed robbery, ethno-religious conflicts, political/ritual killing/assassination among others (Jamiu, 2013, Achumba, et al., 2013 & Nwagboso, 2012). Therefore, attempt is made to discuss some of these security challenges thus:

- i. Ethno-Religious Conflict:** These conflicts are caused by suspicion and distrust among various ethnic groups and among the major religions in the country. Ethno-religious conflict is a situation in which the relationship between members of one ethnic or religious and another of such group in a multiethnic and multi-religious society is characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear, and a tendency towards violent confrontation (Achumba et al. 2013; Salawu, 2010 cited in Ewetan & Urhie, 2014). The frequent and persistent ethnic conflicts and religious clashes between the two dominant religions (Islam and Christianity) especially in the north is a major security challenge that confronts Nigeria.
- ii. Political Violence:** Nigeria has a long history of politically based violence since the collapse of the first republic, and the incursion of the military into governance. The electoral politics in Nigeria have been characterized with violent conflicts, political thuggery, assassinations, and arson. Politicians in Nigerian do not accommodate dialogue, negotiation and consensus (Eme and Onyishi, 2011 cited in Ewetan & Urhie, 2014). Political contests are characterized by desperation, and violent struggle for political power. Recurring political violence in Nigeria could be attributed to over-zealousness and desperation of political gladiators to win elections or remain in office at all cost. These misadventures have often been catastrophic leading to decimation of innocent lives, disruption of economic activities, and the destruction of properties among others.
- iii. Insurgency:** The most fundamental source of insecurity in Nigeria today is terrorism which is traceable to religious fanaticism and intolerance particularly in Northwestern states of Nigeria (Achumba et al. 2013). Terrorism is a global phenomenon and it is ravaging the whole world. In the case of Nigeria, the attacks by Boko Haram/ISWAP cause fear, destruction or death, especially against unarmed targets, property or

infrastructure especially in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states. The intention is to compel those in authority to respond to the demands and expectations of the individual or group behind such violent acts. The dastardly acts of the group include the following among others killing of innocent Nigerians, bombings of major cities and security formations in the Northern parts including Force Headquarters Abuja, bombing of United Nations Office Abuja, hostage taking, raping of unsuspecting women and recent attack of train conveying passengers from Abuja to Kaduna among others.

- iv. **Kidnapping by Bandits:** Kidnapping is yet another main security challenge that has serious adverse effect on economic activities. There is a near consensus that kidnapping is a fallout of the Niger Delta militants' agitations for resource control. Kidnapping has assumed threatening dimensions as it has been embraced by criminally minded elements who now see it as money spinning venture. In the past, the Southeast and Southwest zones have been worst hit by the menace of kidnapping cases but today the trend is rampant in states such as Zamfara, Katsina and Kaduna..
- v. **Armed Robbery:** Armed robbery has become a house hold name in Nigeria. Robbery attacks take place in homes, markets, offices, banks, parks, open places, etc. In the course of the robbery, lives of innocent citizens in most cases are usually lost while huge sums of money and other valuables are looted. The rising cases of robbery in the country have stimulated the formation of neighbourhood watch popularly known as vigilante groups who keep awake in the night so as to ward off any criminal attacks. In the Southeast, the Bakassi Boys is a case in point. Presently, there is an increase rise in the number of community security organizations whose services are required to ensure adequate security as government security outfits are often seen to be overwhelmed with the high rate of crimes in the society (Nwokwu, 2019).
- vi. **Farmers-Herders Clash:** More so, there have been cases of farmers and herders clashes which have led to loss of valuable lives and properties and the situation is currently threatening food security in Nigeria as farmers shy away from their farms for fear of arms wielding herdsmen. Cases abound of herders/herders attacks and reprisal attacks leaving at their wake gory tales.

Effects of Insecurity on Socio-Economic Development

The Global Peace Index (GPI, 2020) has ranked Nigeria 148th among 163 independent countries on the peace ladder. More disturbing is the fact that Nigeria ranks the 3rd Most Terrorized Global Nation, just after Iraq and Afghanistan. Trading Economics, (2019) puts unemployment rate in Nigeria at 23.10 percent. Youths between 20-35 years are disproportionately affected, with an unemployment rate of 36.5 percent (Eneji & Agri, 2020). The specific effects of insecurity on socio-economic development are as follows:

- i. Lack of Freedom and Free Movement:** When people's security are guaranteed, it gives them the freedom, physically and mentally to get on with the business of building their lives without fear of molestation or violent death. Thus, to experience a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being security is essential. Insecurity also affected the free movement of persons and goods; hence, this has negative effects on the overall development.
- ii. Low Productivity:** The productive aspect of most manufacturing business depends largely on the availability and regular supply of raw materials for production. Insecurity has cut off the supply of such raw materials hence, jeopardizing production activities. Besides this, insecurity affects marketing of finished product as there is a continuous exodus from areas of insecurity. There is also an increase in security spending as most business organisations operating in Nigeria spend a lot in maintaining private security outfits.
- iii. Relocation of Business:** In the case of Nigeria, there is also evidence of some businessmen and manufacturing companies having to relocate particularly from the North in recent times to other peaceful parts of the country (Nwagboso, 2012 cited in Arisukwu, 2017). Many of the Igbos and Yorubas from Southern Nigeria who are engaged in various businesses in Northern Nigeria have had to return to their home states to avoid the violence orchestrated by the terrorist group Boko Haram (Suleiman, 2012 cited Arisukwu, 2017).
- iv. Low Foreign Investment:** Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) are investments targeted at building new factories or investing in actual production activities which creates jobs. Achumba and Ighomereho (2013) cited in Ezeajughu (2021) noted that insecurity

discourages investment as it makes investment unattractive to business people. This is because it increases the cost of doing business either through direct loss of goods and properties or the cost of taking precautions against business risks and uncertainty. These costs could have a negative impact on business development and progress. Put differently, insecurity situation that pervades the country has made Nigerian economy unattractive to foreign investors as there is a growing fear that their investments may not be adequately secured. This has negatively affected our national drive towards economic growth and development.

- v. **Threat to Food Security:** The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO, 2021) noted that agriculture currently employs about 70 per cent of the labour force in Nigeria making it a major socio-economic activity especially in the country's Northern region. For instance, insecurity in North East Nigeria has forced farmers to abandon farms and markets due to risks to their lives, thereby posing a huge threat to food security and socio-economic development especially in the North East region (especially in Borno). It is worthy to note that agricultural production has a multiplier effect on ED. For example, some farm produce serves as raw materials in the value chains for agro-allied industries while their byproducts have various uses including poultry and fish feeds as well as other applications (Abdulwahab IB, 2020). Moreover, due to herdsmen's clashes in part of Benue, Kogi and Enugu State that resulted in destruction of farmlands, farm produce in those areas were low causing an increase in the prices of food items during the period.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that the presence of insecurity in any environment constitutes threat to lives and properties, hinders business activities, and discourages local and foreign investors, all of which stifles and retards socio-economic development of a country. It is also concluded that the joint efforts of numerous security agencies were inadequate to mitigate the negative impacts of insecurity on socio-economic development.

Therefore, the paper recommends that there is need for government at all levels (federal, state and local government) to urgently address the root causes of insecurity in the country especially poverty and unemployment and uneven distribution of infrastructural facilities and development

through good governance. This cannot be achieved unless there is free and fair elections at all levels through sound electoral reforms.

Also, the federal government should enhance the capacity of the Nigerian security through improved welfare and sophisticated gadgets and weapons. The Nigerian Immigration Service and Nigerian Customs Service should be provided with modern surveillance devices for remote detection. Further, the overall security architecture of the country should be properly trained and overhauled to be proactive through intelligence gathering so as to nip any perceived security threats in the bud since the reactive posture maintained by these security agencies in crisis situation have not curbed security challenges in the country.

Finally but not the least, government should evolve policies and programmes capable of promoting national consciousness and national loyalty as it will help to eliminate the centrifugal factors that are always at work to tear the country apart. In addition, enlightenment campaigns carried out on the dangers inherent in acts of insecurity through the media and in schools and religion centers.

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