Socioeconomic and Managerial Factors Influencing Insecurity in Nigeria: Evidence from Selected Communities in Rivers and Benue States, Nigeria

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Abstract
This study investigated the socioeconomic and managerial factors influencing efforts to address contemporary security challenges in Nigeria. The focus of the study was to determine the factors fuelling the rise of insurgency in Nigeria. Relative deprivation theory by Garry Runciman (1966) was used in analysing political agitations and feeling of resentment. A total of 240 respondents were selected from Ogoni, Borokiri, and Eleme (in Rivers State), as well as Gwer West LGA (in Benue State). These areas were selected for the study due to intense militancy activities and banditry. The population of the study consisted of males and females living in the selected communities. For ease of data preparation, codes were designed for each item, and a coding schedule was prepared by developing a key for each of the constructs of the instruments. Data collected for the study were analysed using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient at .05 level of significance and 238 degrees of freedom. Results indicated that poverty, lack of good governance, withholding of funds for corporate social responsibility, as well as discrepancies in the management of amnesty programmes for ex-militants were the influencing factors to terrorism in Nigeria. The study concludes that Nigeria's security situation has over the years deteriorated owing to poor governance, political desperation and government inability to deliver the needed dividend. Based on the findings, the study recommended, among others, the need to design and enforce a comprehensive roadmap towards restoring peace to insecurity-ravaged communities, and particularly the Niger Delta region.

Keywords: Boko Haram; Insecurity; Insurgency; Militancy; Terrorism

Introduction

Terrorism has become a global phenomenon in the last few decades, with terror organizations having operations across national boundaries. From the Middle East to Africa to parts of southern America, different groups are adopting terror and threat of terror as tactics in pursuit of political goals. According to Igwe-Okomiso, Obadimu, Iloma, Ogbonna, Okom and Edet (2024), terrorism as a phenomenon has been present in human societies since the beginning or recorded history. In spite of this fact, academic research on the subject matter has been relatively sporadic, especially in Nigeria. As observed by Gupta (2018), it was not until the 1970's that the flow of books and articles on terrorism re-emerged. The prevalence and escalation of insecurity has been accentuated in the 21st century. After the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Centre in the United States of America, the number of books with the word 'terrorism" increased tenfold. Insecurity is said to be transnational if more than one country or territory is involved in its planning, preparation, targeting,

execution or effect of the act like the 1998 simultaneous bombing of American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania (Zenn, 2013).

In Africa, the first terror attack took place on August 7th, 1998, where two massive bombs simultaneously exploded outside the United States Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, killing 224 people and injuring 5,000 others, responsibility was quickly traced to Al-Qaeda. As noted by the Washington Post (2018), the epicentre of jihadism in Africa has long been the Sahel, the region that skirts the southern fringe of the Sahara desert. Islamist groups such as Boko Haram have used the vast relatively empty area to hide, recruit and train. Terror attacks have struck Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso repeatedly, multiple suspected terrorist have been arrested recently in the West African nations of Guinea, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau and Senegal, some of whom were trained by Boko Haram in Nigeria, Mali and in Libya etc.

The weak domestic security institutions of West African states, governance failure, porous border security, proliferation of weapons and mercenaries from destabilized countries in the aftermath of the Arab Spring and other trouble spots in Africa have provided a good source of weaponry and personnel for terror groups in West Africa, emboldening them to undertake audacious attacks in the sub-region. Additionally, several countries in the sub-region have been flagged as being at risk of increased terror activism marked by extra-judicial killings, lack of intergroup cohesion and political instability.

As observed by Ganor (2020), he defined terrorism as the "international use of, or threat to use violence against civilians or against civilian targets in order to attain political aims", infusing the threat of terror and not just the actual act as encompassing what constitutes terrorism. Terrorism is not new in Africa; however countries such as Algeria, Burundi, Congo, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Nigeria, Rwanda, and others have seen an increase in terrorist acts in recent years. There are many explanations to why terrorist attacks occur and some attribute it to poor economic conditions, which is consistent with the popular theory of deprivation and poverty; low education attainment, and historical events such as slavery and ethnic conflicts have also been used to explain terrorism; however, there are studies that suggest otherwise. The magnitude or scale of destruction show that these acts are properly planned and they have devastating impact for victims with injuries (sometimes death), and promote physical asset destruction. The fact is that members of terrorist groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas are neither poor nor uneducated, so calculated attacks tend to have severe economic damage.

In Nigeria, the origin of insecurity can trace to the rise of religious extremism (Maitasine Movement in northern Nigeria) and agitations for resource control (Niger Delta militancy). At the infancy of the insurgency, Boko Haram, which was the main terror group, largely employed Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) to carry out car bombs as well as the used of suicide bombers, most of which were women and underage girls. But from 2014, the group attacked several Nigerian towns in the north and captured them, seizing Bama in 2014 and reportedly killing scores of elderly men who were unable to flee the violence, further expanding its operation the group seized Baga in an offensive that Amnesty International reported resulted in about 2000 deaths. In 2015, the group declared its allegiance to ISIL, as Al-Tamimi (2018) notes, Boko Haram was designated as the group's West African Province (Islamic State West African Province - ISWAP), while Shekau was appointed as it first Vali (governor).

While early instances of insecurity in the Nigeria were limited to religious extremism, recent security challenges are largely hinged on insurgency and banditry. These challenges have impacted greatly on the country's gross domestic product (GDP), foreign direct investment (FDI), food security, national cohesion as well as influencing brain drain. These threats of terror as a political tool by non-state actors in Nigeria have been the subject of inquiry among many researchers. Previous studies on insecurity in Nigeria have investigated the changing nature and trajectory of insecurity in the Nigeria, its impact on the nation's economy, education, culture and

foreign policy. Despite the flurry of literature on Nigeria's insecurity, there is a literature gap on the managerial in addressing contemporary security challenges in Nigeria. Thus, to address this apparent gap, this study seeks to examine the relationship between socioeconomic factors such as poverty and lack of good governance on terrorism; assess the relationship between withholding of funds for corporate social responsibility and insurgency; as well as examine the impact of amnesty programmes for ex-militants on militancy in Nigeria.

To predict the outcome, the study sought to determine the extent to which socio-economic factors such as poverty and lack of good governance were responsible for terrorism in Nigeria; how withholding of funds for corporate social responsibility was influencing insurgency in Nigeria; and to what extent were amnesty programmes for ex-militants in the Niger Delta responsible for militancy in Nigeria?

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this research are to:

1. Examine the relationship between socio-economic factors such as poverty and lack of good governance is responsible for terrorism in Nigeria.
2. To assess whether the withholding of funds for corporate social responsibility in affected areas is responsible for insurgency in Nigeria.
3. To examine the impact of amnesty programmes for ex-militants on militancy in Nigeria.

Theoretical Review

As a sociological and criminological theory, the Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT) is attributed to the works of Garry Runciman (1966) and Ted Gurr (1970). The basic assumption of this theory holds that criminality or deviance as a whole is a subjective behavioural pattern stemming from the feeling that one is unfairly disadvantaged, usually in a group when compared to the economic benefits available to others, stemming from the feeling that one is unfairly disadvantaged, usually in a group when compared to the economic benefits available to others in similar social position. In other words, it is a metacognitive process that makes an individual believe that they are worse-off compared to others, accompanied by feelings of anger and resentment. Social scientists use RDT to predict a wide range of significant outcomes, such as collective action, individual achievement, deviance, and intergroup attitudes, as well as physical and mental health. This theory encapsulates perceptions of injustice, discrimination and unfair treatment of a group of people. The in-group is considered to have less than what is rightfully theirs and to be undeservingly worse off compared to others (Van den Bos, 2018). This theory also explains the subjective perception and related experience of deprivation in comparison to other groups (Power, 2018). Objective deprivation, a variant of RD, captures more tangible indicators, such as poverty or low educational status, and may be present at the same time, influencing subjective feelings of deprivation (Jetten et al., 2020; Jetten et al., 2017; Wolfowicz et al., 2020).

For several years, the RDT has been a significant theory, providing explanations why people engage in social and political aggressive behaviour (see a meta-analytic study, Smith et al., 2012). Research on collective action has provided elaborate empirical evidence based on the relationship between RD, including negative group-based emotions such as collective feelings of injustice, resentment, and anger, and fierce group identification and group engagement, in order to address the perceived injustice (Agnew, 2016; Abrams & Grant, 2012; Van Zomeren et al., 2008). Doosje et al. (2013) discovered some direct and indirect effects between perceived injustices and RD, violent extremist attitudes, and intentions among a youth sample. In addition, several equation models highlight that perceived group deprivation and injustices seem to trigger the onset of other risk factors associated with violent terrorism and insurgency (Rottweiler et al., 2020), self-reported political violence (Pauwels et al., 2018) and self-reported right-wing extremist violence (Pauwels & Heylen, 2020). Some studies revealed the connection between RD and violent extremism, as provided by Obaidi et al. (2018), Obaidi et al. (2019), and Obaidi et al. (2020).

However, it is imperative to emphasize that RD does not necessarily lead to terrorism, insurgency, or radicalism. In fact, research indicates that only some of those who experience such strains develop extremist beliefs and terrorism (Agnew, 2016; Rottweiler et al., 2020). For instance, Gøtzsche-Astrup's (2019) study found significant interactive effects between different personality traits and contextual factors, such as uncertainty, on violent extremist intentions. Ozer et al. (2020) showed that different aspects of one's social identity moderated the effects of insecure life attachment on different extremist measures. Similarly, Pavlovic and Francs' (2021) results highlighted significant interaction effects among individual dispositions and perceptions of contextual factors. The findings demonstrated that dark triad personality traits such as psychopathy and impulsivity moderate the effects of RD and can trigger agitation, insurgency, or terrorism. In view of this, the current study assessed contemporary security challenges and their impact on international relations security and diplomacy in the digital age of today's Nigeria:

Methodology

The cross-sectional survey design was employed in this study. A selected number of participants were recruited due to the large/population and difficulty involved in studying every element in the population. This study was conducted in some parts of Port Harcourt and Benue particularly the Ogoni Axis, Borokiri and Eleme and Gwer West where the activities of the militants and herders there seemed more intense. The population of the study consisted mainly of residents of these areas. From the communities (i.e., Ogoni, Borokiri, Eleme in Port Harcourt and Ingohov District and Mbakpa District), 240 residents were selected (i.e., 60 from each of the 4 listed communities). Prior to administering the questionnaires, consent was sought from the participants and the ethical rules guiding research was adhered to in line with the Belmont report in terms of respect of persons, justice and beneficence.

The instrument used is a study-developed structured (close ended) questionnaire and interview using the 5-point Likert reading "Strongly Agree" (SA), "Agree" (A), "Disagree" (D) "Strongly Disagree" (SD) and "I Don't Know" (DK). For ease of data preparation, codes were designed to each item and a coding schedule was prepared by developing a key for each of the constructs of the instrument. Face and content validity were conducted by giving the questionnaire to psychometric experts and the Cronbach's coefficient of $\alpha = 0.89$ was obtained indicating a robust internal consistency of the instruments. Data collected for the study were analysed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation coefficient.

After collection of data, they were sorted, collated, coded, cleansed and analysed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient measuring relationship between socioeconomic and managerial factors and militancy in Nigeria at $p<.05$ level of significance and 238 degrees of freedom.

Results

Research Question One: To what extent do socio-economic factors such as poverty and lack of good governance responsible for terrorism in Nigeria?

To test this variable, the test statistics used for analysing data for this research question was Pearson product moment correlation statistics analysis. Results of the analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: PPMC Analysis on Poverty and Lack of Good Governance Responsible for Terrorism in Nigeria (*n*=240)

Variables		$\sum X^2$	$\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	*r*-val
Poverty and lack of good governance	2099	3879			
				56453	0.78
Terrorism	1894	2585			

Significant Level = 0.05; Critical Value (r) = 0.178; Df =238.

The result in Table 1 shows that the calculated *r*-value of 0.78 is higher than the critical *r*-value of 0.178 at 0.05 level of significance and 238 degree of freedom. With this result, the research question which stated that poverty and lack of good governance responsible for terrorism is rejected,

while the alternate is accepted, this result therefore shows that, there is a relationship between poverty and lack of good governance on terrorism. This therefore implies that poverty and lack of good governance influences terrorism in Nigeria.

Research Question Two: How does withholding of funds for corporate social responsibility responsible for insurgency in Nigeria?

To test this variable, PPMC statistics analysis was used. Results of the analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis on withholding of funds for corporate social responsibility and insurgency in Nigeria (*n* = 240)

Variables	∑X	∑X²∑Y²	∑XY	*r*-val
Withholding of funds for cooperate social responsibility	2099	3879		
			56453	0.78
Insurgency in Nigeria	1894	2585		

Significant Level = 0.05; Critical Value (r) = 0.178; Df =238

The result in Table 2 shows that the calculated *r*-value of 0.78 is higher than the critical *r*-value of 0.178 at .05 level of significance and 238 degrees of freedom. With this result, the research question which stated that withholding of funds responsible for insurgency is rejected, while the alternate is accepted, this result therefore shows that, there is a relationship between withholding of funds on insurgency. This therefore implies that withholding of funds influences insurgency in Nigeria.

Research Question Three: To what extent does the management of amnesty programme for ex-militants responsible for militancy in Nigeria?

To answer this research question, PPMC analysis was used. Results of the analysis are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3: PPMC Analysis on management of amnesty programme for ex-militants and militancy in Nigeria (*n* = 240)

Variables	∑X	∑X²∑Y²	∑XY	*r*-val
Management of amnesty programme for ex-militants	2099	3879		
			56453	0.78
Militancy in Nigeria	1894	2585		

Significant Level = 0.05; Critical Value (r) = 0.178; Df =238.

The result in Table 1 shows that the calculated *r*-value of 0.78 is higher than the critical *r*-value of 0.178 at .05 level of significance and 238 degree of freedom. With this result, the research question, which states that rehabilitative programmes of amnesty on ex-militants responsible for militancy is rejected, while the alternate is accepted, this result therefore implied that, there is a relationship between failing to rehabilitative programmes of amnesty on the ex-militants on militancy. This therefore indicated that failing to rehabilitate programmes of amnesty on the ex-militants influences militancy in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Nigeria is a complex region caught between affluence and affliction. Although Nigeria gained independence before many other countries in the region of Africa, Nigeria has failed to attend the expected level of political stability due to corruption, weak institutions, conflict and porous borders, among others. Over all, states in the country share a common feature of multiple layer of insecurity, associated with conflict and crime at community and national levels, often across borders and with regional ramifications. With the aforementioned challenges, the activities of terrorists have acquired worrisome national and transnational dimensions in recent times in the region, sparking a singular importance in terms of national, regional and international engagements.

This study agrees with Pillar (2001) who observes that if one conceives of terrorism as a method, rather than a set of actors or their goals, one can remain more subjective and less subject to

observer bias. This therefore indicated that terrorism is goal oriented and the external purpose is often greater than the act itself, terrorism is political and not criminal or economic, also it employs calculated violence and is not sociopathic, neither does it employ violence just for the sake of violence,

However, the study is in consonance with the findings of Onuoha and Ezirim (2013) who defined terrorism as the premeditated use or threat of use of violence by an individual or group to cause fear, destruction or death, especially against unarmed targets, property or infrastructure in a state, intended to compel those in authority to respond to the demands and expectations of the individual or group behind such violent act. Their demands or expectation may be for a change in status quo in terms of the political, economic, ideological, religious or social order within the affected state, or for change in the (in) actions or policies of the affected states in relation to its interaction with other group(s) or states.

The study is in line with UNEPP (2011) who collected samples of soil and fish as well as had meetings with hundred in the affected communities in Ogoni Land, in the Niger Delta Region. The study found heavy contamination of land and underground water as a result of oil exploration thereby causing socio-economic impact on activities such as farming, fishing etc.; making it difficult for the indigenes to carry out their socioeconomic activities in Ogoni land. Finally, the study agrees with the findings of Okoroafor (2025) who found that adverse effect of the conflicts on sustainable development, productivity, wealth creation and poverty led to insurgency. Okoroafor (2025) concludes that governance based on accountability, transparency and pursuit of common interest will significantly reduce insecurity in the country.

Furthermore, as noted by Brock (2022) the global war on terrorism and their decimation have resulted in their migration in search of safe havens to regroup, recruit and train. West Africa with its porous borders have provided the much needed easy passage and large breeding area for these terror groups, some of which have affiliated with local terror organizations. The ethnic, religious and linguistic similarities among these border communities across states' borders have made the migration of terrorist and their blending into the local population of other states easier.

The evidence which is basically laid under four evidence is based on the studies on the emergence of militia as well as conflict in the Niger Delta Region, the peace building effort in the region at the instance of the federal government (Ubhenin, 2013), the United Nations Environmental Protection Programme (UNEPP) in 2011 comprising desk review, filed work and laboratory analysis of environmental and public health impact on oil contamination in Ogoni land of Nigeria. Investigations in Ogoni Land found heavy contamination of land and underground water as a result of oil exploration thereby causing socio-economic impact on thing such as farming, fishing etc. making it almost impossible in Ogoni land to carry out their socio-economic activities (UNEPP, 2011).

Nigeria, like many other developing countries, about 70% of the population live in poverty (Otto & Ukpere, 2022), majority of the population seem to lack access to pipe borne water, health care facilities, electricity and affordable quality education. Amidst these development challenges, the security situation in the country deteriorated drastically. Nigeria's return to democratic rule is threatened by security disaster, requiring far-reaching strategies including the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in security management (Ogbonna, Esuabana, EtimIton & Onyige, 2025). Arguably, considerable progress has been achieved in the areas of freedom of speech and liberty, but series of resource based conflict (Niger Delta), ethno-religious crisis (Jos crisis), and communal conflicts persisted.

Insecurity in Nigeria significantly impacts national relations, affecting various aspects of the country:

1. Economic instability: Insecurity deters prospective investors, leading to stagnation of commercial operations and decline in economic activities. Many companies have stopped operations or relocated due to fear of loss of lives and properties.

2. Food insecurity: disrupted agricultural activities due to banditry and insurgency have led to a decline in food production, threatening food security for millions of people. Over 200,000 individuals have displaced, exacerbating the food crisis.
3. Loss of income and opportunities: insecurity has affected foreign direct investment, interstate travel, and transportation of goods and services. The resulting loss of income and economic opportunities further compounds challenges faced by affected population.
4. Social and humanitarian crises: Insecurity in Nigeria has led to widespread poverty, hunger and fear. The absence of government and security infrastructure in many areas leaves residents vulnerable to criminal elements.
5. Governance and security challenges: The government's response to insecurity requires significant resource allocation, diverting funds from development projects to security operations. This limits the country's financial capacity to address pressing economic issues.

To address these challenges Nigeria need to prioritize comprehensive efforts to restore peace, encourage investment and revive economic activities, establishing and efficient network to coordinate efforts between government agencies and support interagency and interagency collaboration and finally community policing, empowering community policing initiatives and partnership between law enforcement agencies and citizens.

Conclusion

Over the last two decades, insecurity has assumed a significant place in Nigeria's policy framework. While the country was strategizing on addressing the Boko Haram menace, several tens of insurgent and militant groups have emerged within the last ten years. This development has compounded the security situation in the country. This has also impacted negatively on Nigeria's national and international relations through economic instability, food insecurity, loss of income opportunities, social and humanitarian crises. While it could be true that security is a major issue globally, Nigeria's security situation has, over the years, deteriorated owing to poor governance, political desperation and government inability to deliver the needed dividend.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

1. The Federal Ministry of Office of Defence (MOD), in collaboration with the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), should design and enforce a comprehensive roadmap towards restoring peace to insecurity ravaged communities, and particularly the Niger Deltas region. This is intended to stabilise the polity, encourage FDIs, and ultimately revive economy.
2. The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs should ensure that only legitimate beneficiaries of the amnesty programmes are included in the programmes.
3. The National Assembly (Senate & House of Representatives), in collaboration with the Presidency, should synergise towards establishing State Police, as well as encourage community policing initiatives and partnerships between law enforcement agencies and citizens in the affected communities in Nigeria.

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