Governance, Poverty and Insecurity in Nigeria: Exploring the Synergy

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Abstract

This paper examined the linkage between governance, poverty and insecurity in Nigeria and how bad governance has led to rising poverty level and eventual insecurity in Nigeria. Concrete evidences have shown that insecurity in Nigeria has reached an alarming proportion due to government negligence, thus, Nigerians are losing confidence in the country’s security agencies ability to protect their lives and properties; protect them against the threat of political instability, economic downturn and civil unrest. The paper employs secondary sources of data such as journals and textbooks. The paper found a positive relationship between bad governance, poverty and insecurity in Nigeria; the result of causation revealed that poor governance cause poverty and poverty causes insecurity in Nigeria. The paper suggests, among others, that the Nigerian state should put in place good governance, viable anti-terrorism measures and build strong legitimate institutions that can adequately curve the menace of poverty and at the same time respond proactively to the challenge of insecurity in Nigeria.

Keywords: Governance; Poverty; Insecurity; Violence and Nigeria

Introduction

Since the exits of military rule in 1999, the spate of insecurity had increased astronomically, in fact, the current trend has created fears in the minds of Nigerians and foreigners living in the country alike. The spate of crime had intensified and also taken new dimension since the beginning of the second term of the present administration in May 2019. Nefarious activities such as militancy, kidnapping, armed robbery, political assassination, clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers, high rate of kidnapping for ransom, and Boko Haram insurgency in North-east part of the country are issues the country is battling with today. Virtually, all facet of Nigeria’s society are living in fear, either of kidnapping or ritual killings.

It was to stem the tide of this ugly trend that the federal government increased its budgetary allocation on security. In spite of this effort, security situation has not been improved. The federal government also embarked on criminalization of terrorism by passing the ‘Anti-terrorism act’ of the year 2011; it further intensified surveillance as well as patrol of ‘dark spots’ that served as criminals hideouts.

In spite of the effort made in recent past, the level of insecurity is still at alarming rate and to make matter worse, ‘Global Peace Index in their 13th editions of 2019 official ranking released recently rated Nigeria position among other countries to 148 out of 163 countries in the World as the most unsecured and unsafe in terms of tranquility, while Nigeria sits among the top five least peaceful countries in the continent alongside the Democratic
Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Somalia and South Sudan. Similarly, the worsening security situation has also affected the daunting developmental challenges which have affected socio-economic development of the Nigerian-state. The effects of these have greatly impacted negatively on unemployment rate and poverty among Nigeria’s teeming youths. There is recurring budget deficit, low industrial output, skyrocketing inflation rate and infrastructural decay and high domestic and international debts.

The aim of this work therefore, is to examine the link between governance, poverty and perpetuation of insecurity in Nigeria. The remaining part of the paper is organized as follows: section two looks at literature review, theoretical framework, and causes of insecurity in Nigeria, while section three discusses the interface between governance, poverty, insecurity and its implications on Nigerian development, and lastly, findings, conclusion and way forward forms the last section.

**Statement of the Research Problem**

The essence of government is to improve the general welfare and security of the populace. But Nigeria has been experiencing decline in the security of lives and property over the years. Therefore, this study will examine the linkage between governance, poverty and insecurity in Nigeria. This is because fear now defines the daily lives of Nigerians, as a day hardly passes without ugly news of kidnapping, assassination, armed robbery, terrorism and other criminalities. The insecurity situation in the country is so widespread that no part of the country is spared.

It is the position of this study that at the root of Nigerian security crisis are the widespread and endemic poverty, mass youth unemployment, inequality, hunger, bad governance and leadership failure; and until all these are addressed, Nigeria cannot enjoy peace.

It is therefore on this basis that the study aimed at examining these intervening factors and proposing that ending poverty is a sure way to peace and development in Nigeria.

**Objectives of the Study**

The study attempts to attain the following objectives;
1. To examine the synergy between governance, poverty and insecurity in Nigeria
2. To examine the implications of the state of insecurity in Nigeria and reflect on how badly insecurity has dented Nigeria’s external image.
3. To offer useful suggestions on how to halt the menace of insecurity in Nigeria.

**Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study will be of benefit to the society considering that good governance and security plays an important role in the political, social and economic development of any nation. The study would probably be a working policy execution method that can help the government and its agencies in implementing its policies on good governance effectively. It will further assist the government to understand the problems at hand and fashion out the best way to tackle them. While it will also assist scholars who may wish to carry out a research on rising wave of insecurity in Nigeria.

**Methodology**

The study is ex-post factor research; relying on the data readily documented overtime. The study area is the entire country Nigeria, as one security issue in any part of the country will definitely have consequences on other parts of the country. It is therefore entirely a qualitative study. Secondary materials such as journals,
books, unpublished papers, official documents of the governments and newspapers were used.

**Conceptual Clarifications**

**Governance**

There is no generally accepted definition of what constitutes governance. One of the more frequently used definitions is associated with the World Bank (Holmberg et al., 2009). According to this definition, there are three components that constitute governance. “(1) the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced, (2) the capacity of the government to effectively formulated and implement sound policies, and (3) the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them governance means the use of political power to manage affairs of a state, shaped its economy and social environment for the benefits of the citizens. According to Cheema and Naguire (1992:5) “people use governance in their daily lives to manage human relationship, just as corporations and countries use it to manage their interaction and activities. Governance is a complex mechanism that design the processes, relationships and institutions through which individual and groups articulate their interest and civic rights, Similarly, governance “encompasses the political, economic, legal, judicial social and administrative authority and therefore includes government, the private sector and the Civil society (UNDP, 1997:9),” while good governance explain the effective and judicious use of resources to solve societal problems. This is characterized by rule of law, transparent accountability and equity.

**Poverty**

Poverty connotes different meaning to different people. It could be lack of basic needs to live one’s life, not having enough to feed, clinic to go to and other essential things that can make life worth living. Poverty is not only inadequate income; it is also the lack of access to basic services and amenities, the lack of security and exclusion from community (IFHE, 2003). World Bank (2001) and Okolie (2010:12) conceptualized poverty in materialist terms as deprivation vulnerability and exclusion. According to Okolie (2010) “poverty is a condition and situation of want, lack of food, clothing, shelter, mobility and primary societal expectations” However, poverty does not only indicate lack of capacity to satisfy innate needs” but also includes “absence of life expectancy, deprivation and circumscription of state capacity to roll back privations and structural distortions that sustain favorable conditions for the reproduction of poverty” (Nwozor, 2017).

**Security**

According to Aliyu (2012), security implies a state of reduced or contained threats and tension in which the stability of a state is not in an imminent danger of destruction from within and without. Fayeye (2010:195) define security as the composition, structure and responsibilities of the security sector. Security can however be seen in two categories; the protection of lives and properties of the citizens and the protection of sovereignty of a state.

Insecurity on the other hand is the opposite of security. Insecurity means the absence of security. It means the state of being insecure, uncertainty, danger and lack of protection. Thus, once all these challenges are ravaging a society, it described a situation of insecurity. Insecurity could be located from political, economic, social or religious, personal hatred or discrimination. According to Aliyu (2012), the state was established for the protection of lives and property. Thus, we have some embellished Institutions that were saddled with responsibilities of for protection of lives and properties. These include Army, Police, state security services, Immigration and Prisons.
services. Insecurity can be described as a breach of peace, and security, (which Nigerian state has witnessed for the past years in which had resulted to destructions of lives and properties which according to Bouchat (2010:84), include lack of stability, or violence through frequent coups, civil wars and cross-border fighting, dominance of self-serving elites, inadequate citizens representation, and poor or counterproductive government policies. Insecurity refers to state of anxiety which stemmed from a concrete or alleged lack of protection by political authority. It also emphasis lack of freedom.

Most theories on insecurity show that there is a connecting trend between poverty and insecurity. The progressive social theory readily addresses this issue. This theory looks not to the individual poverty but to the economic, political and social system which cause people to have limited opportunities and resources with which to achieve income and well-being.

Insecurity accords a process or condition of exposure to danger, indeed a pervasive unsafe condition of existence. Given the understanding of the meaning and impact of poverty, it is safe to build a nexus between governance, poverty and insecurity as a “cause and effect” syndrome. In other words, all of them that are desirable such that it is practically impossible to find one without the other accompanying it. And just as governance impact on socio-economic and political circumstances of a people, so does poverty manifests in the different segments of any society and generates insecurity. In the case of Nigeria, insecurity manifests in diverse ways and these cannot be dissociated from the ravaging poverty in the country.

Governance, Poverty and Insecurity:
The Nexus

The fundamental responsibility of any responsive government should be welfare of her citizens most especially provision of employment opportunities and other dividends of governance. However, bad governance and poor leadership has destroyed the economy thereby establishing poverty and the present state of insecurity. Since the beginning of the new democratic journey, an atmosphere of insecurity has pervaded the polity (Aliyu 2012). Before now, most serious security challenges facing the country was Niger/delta crisis, Known for oil pipeline destruction and hostage taking, “an area viewed increasingly as lawless and unsafe, particularly for foreign nationals and Nigerians associated with the oil industry, government officials and security forces (Commonwealth Observer Group 2007: 12-13). The incapacitation of government to provide adequate security has created palpable fear all over the country over time.

According to Bishop Catholic Conference of Nigeria (CBN) in (The Nation, 2012:5) “Nigerians continue to live in fear and tension despite the acclaimed efforts to beef up security in the nation”. Bombings and killings of innocent Nigerians in north east continue unabated, while kidnapping, looting and political assassination has taken new dimension.

The failure of governance to effectively police the affairs of Nigerian-state is undermining the benefit of democratic governance and as such threatening its sustainability. This development has some implications. The editorial comment in (The Punch, 2012:13), argues “investors are weary of coming to a country where their lives are not safe”. So worrisome was “Human Development Index in 2017/18 that put Nigeria in the lowest human development category. Thus, Nigeria was positioning 157 out of 189 countries and territories surveyed globally, while the country was also ranked 148th among 163 in development status and territories according to their level of peacefulness. According to the rating, country like Chad is more peaceful than Nigeria. Poor
governance has therefore led to rising waves of poverty and insecurity in the country. It must be stressed however that the current trend of violence has imprinted negative thought on psyche of Nigerians that the government security apparatus is incapable of guaranteeing the safety and security of the citizens”. This in consequence had created fear, limiting the people’s ability to produce and generate resources for better living condition.

There is no doubt, poverty provide temptation to cause violence. The deteriorating security situation in Nigeria is exacerbated by the alarming rate of Youth unemployment. In the words of Odunga (2012) “beyond the government gestures where government after government scratch the face there has never been any concerted effort to truly address the poverty cancer in the country”. Similar area of concern again is the size of the nation’s budget spent on recurrent expenditure and the corruption associated with the budgetary system. Thus, Nigeria’s 1996 figure of 67.4 million citizens living in “absolute poverty” with less than $1 a day has now risen to over 100 million (National Bureau of Statistics, 2011). In the words of Jaquish (2011L28), “Nigeria’s persistent poverty, points to a fundamental failure in national and local governance and exposes the corruption that defines Nigeria life”.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopted the “frustration-agression theory” to explain the connection between governance, poverty and insecurity in Nigeria. The theory was proposed by John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mower and Robert Sears in 1939 and further developed by Neal Miller in 1941 and Leonard Berkowitz in 1969. The theory says that aggression is always the result of blocking or frustrating, a person effort to attain a goal. Aggressive behavior such as violent protest result from frustration individuals feels when they are restrained from achieving their valued goals”, Yates (1962). Scholars have also argues that an “individual whose basic desire are frustrated is likely to react to his condition by directing aggressive behavior at what is perceived to be responsible for thwarting those desires or as a substitute”, Anifowose (1982). With regards to high rate of insecurity in Nigeria, it can be argue that it’s as a result of lack of basic needs i.e. job security, infrastructural decay, absence of food and other valuable things that can make life enduring. According to Gurr (1970) parts of individual or groups frustration may flow from a condition—refers to as relative deprivation, the perceived disparity between an individual’s expectations and fulfillment. However, the greater this disparity the more or greater individual anger and desire for violence.

Forms of insecurity and crime rate in Nigeria

Nigeria is currently engulfed in a security crisis and the authority unarguably is in state of dilemma on how to approach the menace. There are various forms of crime and insecurity that are not limited to the following.

- Kidnapping
- Headsmen/farmers clashes
- Arm robbery
- Murder and Assassinations
- Terrorism
- Political violence

Apart from Boko Haram insurgency which has been with the country since 2009, the most disturbing among this violence is kidnapping for ransom which has become a lucrative business.
Degree of crime rate in Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of crime</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crime increasing in the past 3 years</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home broken</td>
<td>58:31</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arm robbery</td>
<td>68:31</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car stolen</td>
<td>60:05</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attacked</td>
<td>60:47</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being insulted</td>
<td>55:12</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vandalism and theft</td>
<td>08:94</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boko-Haram attack</td>
<td>80:01</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem of corruption, bribery and Kidnapping</td>
<td>84:90</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical attacks because of your color, ethnic or</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs related cases</td>
<td>63:57</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: https://www.number.com/country results> country-Nigeria updated by the researcher
NB: This is online survey.

Underline Issues and Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

The above analysis examined various forms of insecurity threat facing Nigerians on daily basis. Boko Haram attack, corruption, and kidnapping top the crime rate. It can thus be argued that the Nigerian state is structurally and institutionally weak in protecting lives and property which is the hallmark of any responsible government.

Fundamentally, both civilian administrations and military regimes in Nigeria, prophesied good governance but what Nigerians had experienced for decades is far cry from good governance, this is not unconnected with high rate of poverty and infrastructural decay despite the abundant human and material resources nature has endowed the country. The country is therefore lacking in good governance, accountability, high literacy level, economic growth, security etc. Alemika (2004:2) argue that “in a substantive sense, Nigeria suffers from state failure to guarantee every citizen the right to economic, social and political security and inclusiveness”. Odoshinmokhel (2012:13) corroborated Alemika and submits that “Nigeria is a failed project and can conveniently be called a failed state. Nevertheless, the identification of sources of insecurity is very crucial in determining how to formulate policies and intervention in tackling the menace. No doubt, crime rate is quite amazing and keep increasing on daily basis. There are different causes of crime as studies conducted globally to unravel and bring down criminal activities have yielded fewer results.

However, various factors encourage it directly or indirectly. The indirect factors are:

**Weak state institutions:** Various political institutions in Nigeria have been unable to manage differing groups’ interest to provide adequate protection to accommodate growing demand for political participation and all inclusive system of governance. Lack of institutional capacity resulting from government failure is what Fukuyama (2004) described as the corrosion or break down of institutional infrastructure.

**The growing pervasive inequalities:** There is a growing disparity in economic wellbeing among Nigerians. There is growing perception on alleged inequalities in sharing of resources among groups in the polity, political offices and other benefits from government circle, this has become a primary source of disharmony and resentment. As inquired by Onuola (2011) “a large number of the population is frustrated and have lost hope, especially the youths and
have now emerged to express their disillusion about the pervasive state of inequality.

**Changing climate:** The changing in global climate has increased crime and level of insecurity in the country (Aliyu 2012). Climate changes are an issue that will continue to have impact on direct and indirect human and state security. The movement of headsmen with their cattle from one region to another is due to general climate change in the country which has added new dimension to security challenge in the country.

**Porous Borders:** Nigerian porous borders have contributed immensely to security challenge facing the country today, given the porosity of our borders and inability of security agencies to prevent the influx of arms into the country from neighboring countries. Small arms and light weapons proliferation and availability of these weapons have encourage militant groups to have easy access to arms, Hazen & Homer (2011).

The direct factors are:

1. **Unemployment and poverty:** These problems have pushed thousands of people to join armed gang and criminality. Nigerians youths today are either engaging in internet fraud, kidnapping or armed bandit. This is not unconnected with mal administration and bad leadership.

2. **Some youths also take to crime because they see their friends going into it. This had increased rising wave of insecurity. The youth’s forms gang groups to engaged in crime as an easy means of acquiring wealth.**

3. **Drugs taking is another factor that has encourage the youths to go into crime. It is not rare this day for youths to involve in buying and selling of hard drugs, while some also involve in export of cannabis and “Wee Wee” across Nigeria’s borders.**

4. **Society also encourages youths to involve in crime. The level of inequality in the society plays a significant role in encouraging youths to crime. The rich in Nigerian society today are fond of oppressing the poor. This motivates the poor people to engage in crime so as to catch up with demand of the society.**

**Conclusion**

From the foregoing, it is clear that Nigeria is on the brink of total collapse due to poor governance and insecurity as a result of poverty. And this will no doubt have negative impacts not only on the African region but also on the international community. It is therefore behooves the Nigerian government, Nigerians and the international community to strive and curb the problem of insecurity in the country through poverty alleviation programmes, job creation, attraction of foreign direct investment and other measures that can significantly reduce poverty in the country.

**The Way Forward**

1. Nigerian security architecture should be reform so as to ensure transparency and adequate oversights. The current system and situation is riddle with corruption which contributed to its operational limitations, frequent misconduct and poor performance on the war front.

2. **Integration of other security apparatus i.e. Nigeria security and Civil defense, Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), Nigeria Immigration Service, Nigerian Custom Service etc into either the police or military. Apart from efficiency, it reduces bureaucratic overheads and promotes effective operation most especially during joint combat operations.**

3. **Improving socio-economic development of the country. This is by providing atmosphere for industrial and economic growth, infrastructural development, and promotion of gainful employment, high level of educational facilities and Medicare for the citizens etc.**
4. Involvement of private security outfit would definitely assist most especially on information gathering.
5. Installations of electronic gadgets for security in cities and major dark spots along our express ways.
6. Good governance, corruption free society, socio-economic development and radical changes in values are all fundamental in addressing the crises of insecurity in Nigeria.

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