

MASS POVERTY AS A CONCOMITANT FACTOR FOR INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

Felix Ugochukwu Amadi^{1*} & Georgenia Chinwe Ahamefula²

¹Department of Social Studies, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria

²Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria

*felixugochukwuamadi@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: This paper titled “Mass poverty as a concomitant factor for insecurity in Nigeria” begins with an introduction in which an exposition on insecurity in Nigeria was given. The study had a general objective as well as three specific objectives. A literature review on the nexus between poverty and insecurity was then performed. The reasons for mass poverty in Nigeria were X-rayed followed by insecurity. Conflict theory was adopted in building the theoretical framework for the study. This was followed by the research methodology. The study covered one state from each of the six-geopolitical zones and simple random and purposive sampling techniques were adopted. Both secondary and primary data were used for this study. The sample size for the study was 22,240 respondents, with 3822 in each state. The questionnaires were administered via Google Forms, and community groups were reached through WhatsApp with the help of group admins. From the fieldwork, 98.9% of the respondents blame bad and corrupt leadership for poverty in Nigeria. 89.92% blame the dependent nature of our economic and political systems for poverty in Nigeria. 94.2% of the respondents see the neglect of agriculture as being responsible for poverty in Nigeria while 92.1% of the respondents attribute a lack of basic infrastructure as being responsible for poverty in Nigeria. Additionally, 98.9% of the respondents agreed that good, visionary and transparent leadership at various levels of government will resolve poverty and insecurity in Nigeria while 94.4% of them agreed that eliminating corruption in Nigeria will help to resolve poverty and insecurity in the country. Some concrete recommendations were proffered at the end as panacea to the issues of mass poverty and insecurity in Nigeria.

Keywords: Mass poverty, Concomitant factor, Insecurity, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Insecurity is a serious issue today in Nigeria. On a daily basis in the country, lives and property are lost to insecurity. From the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast Nigeria (Yobe, Bornu, Adamawa, Bauchi) millions of Nigerians are now internally displaced and tens of thousands of lives are lost with whole communities and local government areas sacked by the insurgents. Markets, schools, police-stations, motor-parks, army barracks, hospitals, banks, churches, and mosques have been burnt and bombed by these insurgents. School children have been kidnapped or killed, women raped and other mayhem unleashed on the people.

In the Northwest Nigeria (states such as Zamfara, Kebbi, Sokoto and Katsina) armed bandits and kidnapers terrorize the people. Razing of entire communities, armed robbery, kidnapping, raping of women, cattle rustling and total breakdown of law and order are prevalent. The North-Central or Middle-Belt region states such as Plateau, Benue and Kogi, have witnessed kidnappings, killings and conflicts between cattle herders and local people who are predominantly farmers. This has led to countless losses of life and massive dislocations in the socioeconomic life of people. In the Southwest Nigeria, states such as Oyo, Ondo, Ekiti and Ogun have witnessed kidnapping, armed robbery, ritual killings and conflicts between cattle herders and the local farming population.

In the Southeast Nigeria, states such as Imo, Ebonyi, Abia, Anambra and Enugu have also witnessed kidnappings, killings, armed-robbery and serious conflicts between Fulani cattle herders and farmers. In South-South states such as Rivers, Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Edo, Delta and Cross-Rivers have experienced militancy, kidnapping, armed robbery and killings. The level of insecurity in the country has reached an alarming level as Nigerians no longer sleep with their eyes closed.

Recently, in Imo, Abia, Ebonyi and other states, many policemen and soldiers have been killed, police stations have burned, INEC offices have bombed and our law enforcement agencies have stretched to breaking points. Nigeria has degenerated to a state of anarchy, lawlessness, fear, anxiety, uncertainty and restlessness as the country rapidly fail.

A number of reasons can be adduced for this state of affairs such as mass poverty, mass unemployment, and a failed political class inter alia, but the focus of the paper will be on mass poverty and insecurity in Nigeria. This paper begins with an introduction, a statement of the problem, research questions, a literature review, then conceptual and theoretical framework, a research methodology, a conclusion and recommendations.

Statement of the problem

Mass poverty and insecurity are serious and burning issues today in Nigeria. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS,2021), 133 million Nigerians or 63 percent of Nigerians suffer from multidimensional poverty. A country where such a large segment of the population is in dire straits and cannot afford even the most basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, health, and education is sitting on a keg of gun powder that can explode at any time. Poverty breeds anxiety, pain, anger, frustration, misery and dejection among the people. It is not a coincidence that the two epicentres of poverty in Nigeria namely, Northwest Nigeria and Northeast Nigeria are also the epicentres of insecurity in Nigeria. This study aims to explore the relationship between mass poverty and insecurity in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to demonstrate the relationship between poverty and insecurity in Nigeria. Other specific objectives include the following;

1. To examine the reasons for mass poverty in Nigeria.
2. To examine the reasons for insecurity in Nigeria.
3. To provide solutions to the issues of poverty and insecurity in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

Poverty: The concept of poverty has many different aspects. However, for the purposes of this study, we define poverty as the inability to meet the necessities of life such as food, shelter, health care, education, clean water and sanitary conditions. It denotes lack, squalor, privation, pauperism, penury, indigence, need, want, hardship and impoverishment.

Insecurity

The word “insecurity” connotes many meanings, such as “uncertainty” or anxiety about oneself, the state of being open to danger or threat or a lack of protection. (Beland, 2005), as cited in (Ndubuisi-Okolo & Anigbuogu, 2019), defines “insecurity as the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection”. Similarly, (Achumba, Ighomeroho & Akpor, 2013) presented two dimensions of insecurity. First, 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. Second, 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. For the purpose of this study, insecurity is the lack of protection for the life and property in the society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between poverty and insecurity in Nigeria

The (NBS, 2021) that 133 million Nigerians suffer from multidimensional poverty. This figure is approximately 63% of the population. The indices of the MDP include income, education, health and other indices such as child mortality, nutrition, years of schooling, school attendance, sanitation, access to safe drinking water, electricity, housing, etc. which paint a very appalling picture of the quality of life of Nigerians.

Additionally, the (NBS, 2022) released poverty figures for the six geopolitical zones of the country as follows:

Northwest	-	45.49 million
Northeast	-	20.47 million
Northcentral	-	20.19 million
Southsouth	-	19.66 million
Southwest	-	16.27 million
Southeast	-	10.86 million.

The (NBS, 2023) poverty rates for the six geopolitical zones are as follows;

Northwest	-	71.4%
Northeast	-	69.1%
Northcentral	-	60.7%
Southsouth	-	59.5%
Southwest	-	55.5%
Southeast	-	49.8%

These alarming statistics paint a horrible picture of the level of poverty in Nigeria. The three geopolitical zones in North Nigeria which have the highest poverty rates are also the major epicentres of insecurity, violence and crime in the country. This is no coincidence at all. Extreme poverty, want, lack, and deprivation predisposes human beings to negative thoughts which can lead to violence and crime. Many of the Boko Haram members in Northeast Nigeria have blamed poverty and hunger for their involvement in terrorist activities. There simply cannot be peace, tranquillity or safety in a country where the majority of its people are in poverty and deprivation. The (Global Peace Index, 2023) ranks Nigeria 144th out of 163 countries in terms of peace, safety and security worldwide and 37th in Africa. This ranking shows that Nigeria is one of the most unsafe, insecure and unstable countries in the world.

What are the reasons for mass poverty in Nigeria?

1. The existence of bad leadership: According to (Alugbuo & Akpanabia, 2013) and (Owolabi, 2009), corruption, greed, selfishness, visionlessness, ineptitude, directionlessness, among virtually all our leaders in the past and present have contributed to poverty in Nigeria. These bad leaders have been mismanaged the economy looted the state treasury for decades and made the populace impoverished.
2. The dependent nature of our economic and political systems: According to Okoi-(Uyuouyo, 2008) and (Akinboye, 2008), our political and economic systems are vulnerable because they are dependent on foreign dominance, dictation and control. The West's political and economic hegemony over Nigeria causes backwardness, widespread poverty and unemployment while enriching the West.
3. Neglect of Agriculture: According to (Ochienta, 2014), the neglect of the agricultural sector since the 1970s, with the dawn of the era of oil has contributed to mass poverty in Nigeria.
4. The lack of basic infrastructure: According to (Obumneke, 2012), the lack of basic infrastructure such as electricity, pipe borne water, roads, railways, schools and hospitals, has also contributed to poverty in the country.

What are the reasons for Insecurity In Nigeria?

1. The "unitary" system of government in Nigeria: The overconcentration of power and resources at the centre in a complex and diverse country such as Nigeria is an invitation to anarchy. The 1999 constitution is a fraudulent imposition on the people and remains unworkable as it favour only the core North to the detriment of other geo-political zones.
2. Poor Quality Leadership: Since 1967, Nigeria has been inept, visionless, directionless, greedy, corrupt and predatory leaders across all levels of governance. These "leaders" see themselves as Lords and Masters of the people and not as servants of the people (Amadi, Ahamefula & Onyeocha, 2017).
3. Monumental levels of corruption: Monumental embezzlement/ misappropriation of public funds, looting and squander mania have been the order of the day in Nigeria since 1960. Public funds meant for water, hospitals, electricity, roads, schools, etc are looted and embezzled with impunity by public office holders to address the pain, anguish and suffering of the people. A few classic examples of this monumental corruption will suffice here. The Nigeria extractive industry transparency initiative (NEITI) discovered that \$11.6 billion was missing from the LNG company dividend payments of Nigeria (Ifeanyi, Izeze, 2015). Sixty million barrels of oil valued at \$13.7 billion were stolen under the watch of the National Oil Company, NNPC, from 2009-2012 (Punch, 2015).

Additionally, diversion of 60% of the \$1 billion foreign loans obtained from the Chinese by the Ministry of Finance (NTA.ng, 2015) were diverted. There has been massive scam in weapons and defense procurement and misuse of 3 trillion Naira defense budgets since 2011 under the guise of fighting Boko Haram (Campuspapers, 2015). In all, Nigeria is estimated to have lost over \$400 billion to corruption since independence (Daily Post Nigeria, 2012). This monumental level of corruption is the reason why Nigeria is backwards and underdeveloped and why there is so much poverty and insecurity in Nigeria due to the neglect of the people and the failure of governance.

4. Mass Poverty and Unemployment: With mass poverty and high unemployment, Nigeria is fertile ground for insecurity. According to the (NBS, 2020), the unemployment rate was 33.3% in 2020, it rose to 37.7% in 2022 (NBS, 2022) and 40.6% in 2023 (NBS, 2023).
5. The Porous Nature of our Borders: the porous nature of our borders has contributed to insecurity in the country as people move unchecked in and out of the country. As a result, there is an unchecked inflow of small arms and light weapons into the country which has aided militancy and criminality in Nigerian (Hazen & Horner, 2007), as cited in (Ndubuisi & Anigbuogu, 2019). Available data show that Nigeria hosts over 70 percent of approximately 8 million illegal weapons in West Africa (Edeko, 2011) as cited in (Ndubuisi et al, 2019). Additionally, the porosity of the Nigerian borders has aided the uncontrollable influx of migrants, mainly young men from neighboring countries such as Republic of Niger, Chad and the Republic of Benin, who are responsible for some criminal acts (Adeola & Oluyemi, 2012) as cited in (Ndubuisi et al, 2019). Nigeria is one of the most porous countries in the world.
6. Ethnic/ religious conflicts in Nigeria: (Hazen & Horner, 2007), (Salawu, 2010), and (Igbuzor, 2011) as cited in (Ndubuisi et al, 2019) have identified ethno-religious conflicts as a major sources of insecurity in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The Conflict theory was adopted in building the theoretical framework for the study.

Conflict theory is a form of critical theory, based on the works of Karl Marx and Max Webber, which focus on inequalities within society such as wealth, power and class and how such inequalities impact individual life experiences and chances of creating conflict between and within social groups. The Marxian strand of conflict theory will be utilized here. Conflict theory has three assumptions; humans are self-interested, societies operate under perpetual scarcity of resources and conflict is pervasive and unavoidable within social groups and between social groups. Karl Marx (1818-1883) stratified society into two major classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The bourgeoisie owns the means of production and controls all the instrumentalities of the state whereas the proletariats only subsist by selling their labor. Marx argued that the interests of these two classes are diametrically opposed to each other and ideologically divergent. He postulated “that the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle”. He advocated the overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat via a revolution. Applying this theory to the study, it can be affirmed that the crisis, crime, discord, instability, disequilibrium and insecurity in Nigeria are the result of competition for scarce resources, inequality, poverty and gross discontent of the marginalized.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Scope of the Study: This study focused primarily on assessing the issues of mass poverty and national insecurity in Nigeria. The causes of poverty in Nigeria were X-rayed and related to insecurity.

Study area: Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and is located in West Africa. It has thirty-six component states in addition to the federal capital territory (Abuja). The country has vast fertile lands, very rich in oil, and solid minerals and has a very youthful population. However, despite of all its potential, Nigeria remains grossly underdeveloped with some of the worst poverty and insecurity indices in the world. The country has over 250 ethnic groups and 774 local government areas. The study area covers the following six geopolitical zones of the country: Northwest, Northeast, Northcentral, Southwest, Southeast and Southsouth Nigeria. Katsina was selected to represent Northwest Nigeria, Bornu for the Northeast Nigeria, Benue for the Northcentral Nigeria, Ondo for the Southwest Nigeria, Imo for the Southeast Nigeria and Bayelsa for the Southsouth Nigeria. Each of these states was purposively selected on the basis of the level of poverty and insecurity.

Sampling Technique

This study adopted simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. The simple random sampling technique makes it possible to make generalizations from the study.

Population and Sample Size

According to (Worldometer, 2024), Nigeria has a population of 229,321,166 as of Tuesday July 16, 2024. Using the Taro Yamane formula at 0.01% error margin, a sample size of 22,932 was obtained. This was then distributed equally among each of the six states. The research questionnaire was then administered; 3822 in each of the states through a goggle form. The goggle forms were administered in community groups through WhatsApp, with the help of group members or group admins.

Methods of Data Collection

A content analysis of books, journals, newspapers and internet sources was performed to obtain relevant information. Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. The primary data were derived through the use of closed-ended research questionnaires guide the respondents towards the research objectives properly, whereas the secondary data were obtained from internet sources, specifically from various websites.

Method of Data Analysis

The data were presented in tables and were analysed via descriptive and inferential statistics.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Table 1: Distribution of Questionnaires

S/N	States	Number of Questionnaires Distributed	Number of Questionnaires Returned	Total %
1.	Katsina	3822	3700	16.6
2.	Bornu	3822	3650	16.4
3.	Benue	3822	3750	16.8
4.	Ondo	3822	3740	16.8
5.	Imo	3822	3800	17.1
6.	Bayelsa	3822	3600	16.1
	Total	22,932	22,240	100%

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2024

The above result show that the highest response was from Imo State, whereas the lowest responses were from Bayelsa and Bornu States.

Table 2: What are the reasons for mass poverty in Nigeria?

S/N	Questions	Yes	No	Don't Know	Total
(1)	Is bad and corrupt leadership responsible for poverty in Nigeria	22,000 98.92%	240 1.08%	—	22,240 100%
(2)	Is the dependent nature of our economic and political systems responsible for poverty in Nigeria?	20,000 89.92%	2000 8.99%	240 1.08%	22,240 100%
(3)	Is the neglect of agriculture responsible for poverty in Nigeria?	21,000 94.42%	1000 4.50%	240 1.08%	22,240 100%
(4)	Is the lack of basic infrastructure responsible for poverty in Nigeria?	20,500 92.18%	1000 4.50%	740 3.33%	22,240 100%

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2024

The above table shows that bad, corrupt, selfish and greedy leadership, the dependent nature of our economic and political systems, the neglect of agriculture and lack of basic infrastructure are some of the reasons for mass poverty in Nigeria.

Table III: What are the reasons for insecurity in Nigeria?

S/N	Questions	Yes	No	Don't Know	Total
1	Bad and corrupt leadership is one of the reasons for insecurity in Nigeria	22,000 98.9%	240 1.08%	—	22240 100%

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2	The “unitary” system of government in Nigeria is one of the reasons for insecurity in Nigeria.	20,000 90%	1000 4.50%	1240 5.58%	22,240 100%
3	Mass poverty and unemployment are some of the reasons for insecurity in Nigeria.	22,000 98.9%	240 1.08%	–	22,240 100%
4	The porous nature of our borders is one of the reasons for insecurity in Nigeria.	19,000 85.4%	2000 8.99%	1240 5.58%	22,240 100%
5	Ethnic and Religious conflicts are some of the reasons for insecurity in Nigeria.	19,500 87.68%	2000 8.99%	740 3.33%	22,240 100%

Source: Researcher’s fieldwork, 2024

The table above shows that bad and corrupt leadership, the “unitary” system of government in Nigeria, mass poverty and unemployment, the porous nature of our borders and ethnic / religious conflicts are some of the reasons for insecurity in Nigeria.

Table IV: How can mass poverty and insecurity be resolved in Nigeria?

S/N	Questions	Yes	No	Don’t Know	Total
	Good, visionary and transparent leadership at various levels of government will resolve poverty and insecurity in Nigeria	22,000 98.9%	240 1.08%	–	22,240 100%
	Eliminating corruption in Nigeria will help to resolve poverty and insecurity	21,000 94.4%	1000 4.50%	240 1.08%	22,240 100%
	Diversifying the economy and developing agriculture, solid minerals and manufacturing sectors will help to resolve poverty and insecurity in Nigeria.	20,000 89.9%	2000 8.99%	240 1.08%	22,240 100%
	Providing basic infrastructure like electricity, water, roads, railways, schools and hospitals across Nigeria will help to resolve poverty and insecurity	21,000 94.4%	1000 4.50%	240 1.08%	22,240 100%

Source: Researcher’s fieldwork, 2024

The above table shows that having good, visionary and transparent leadership at various levels in Nigeria helps to resolve poverty and insecurity in Nigeria. Additionally, eliminating corruption, diversifying the economy, and providing basic infrastructure across Nigeria will help to resolve poverty and insecurity in the country.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study, revealed that bad and corrupt leadership, the dependent nature of our economic and political systems, the neglect of agriculture and a lack of basic

infrastructure were some of the reasons for mass poverty in Nigeria. This is in line with the assertions of some scholars such as (Alugbuo & Akpanabia, 2013), (Okoi-Uyuouyo, 2008), (Owolabi, 2009), (Khor, 2005), (Akinboye, 2008), (Ochienta, 2014) and (Obumneke, 2012). The findings further revealed that bad and corrupt leadership, the “unitary” system of government in Nigeria, mass poverty and unemployment, ethnic religious conflicts and the porous nature of our borders are some of the reasons for insecurity in Nigeria.

These findings are in line with the assertions of researchers such as (Ndubisi-Okolo & Anigbuogu, 2019), (Edeko, 2011), (Adeola & Oluyemi, 2012), (Hazen & Horner, 2007), (Salawu, 2010) and (Igbuzor, 2011). In view of these findings, this study revealed that providing good, visionary and transparent leadership across all levels of government in Nigeria, eliminating corruption, diversifying the nation’s economy, checking the porosity of our borders and providing basic infrastructure all over Nigeria will help to resolve poverty and insecurity in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The issue of mass poverty has far-reaching consequences for any nation as poverty dehumanizes and debases people. Given Nigeria’s abundant natural and human resources, Nigerians have no business being poor. Needless to say, poverty breeds insecurity, and insecurity also breeds poverty. No meaningful development or progress can be made in an unstable, insecure and chaotic environment. This is why all levels of government in the country should do everything humanly possible to make mass poverty a thing of the past in Nigeria.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. There is a dire need for honest, transparent, visionary, selfless and dedicated leadership across all levels of governance in Nigeria.
2. The corruption and misappropriation of public funds should attract capital punishment in addition to the forfeiture of such stolen funds.
3. The diversification of the nation’s economy should be vigorously pursued. To this end, a national master plan or blueprint should be developed and implemented for the agriculture and solid minerals sector.
4. Basic infrastructure such as electricity, water, roads, railways, hospitals and schools should be provided for all Nigerians.
5. The Nigerian Immigration Service should step up to drastically reduce the porosity of our borders to check the influx of bandits, terrorists and criminals into the country.

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