

**NEGLECT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD INSECURITY,
HUNGER AND INSECURITY IN NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT: This paper titled, “Neglect of Agriculture, Food Insecurity, Hunger and Insecurity in Nigeria” began with an introduction. This was followed by the operationalization of concepts. Then the statement of the problem. Three research objectives were stated to guide the study namely: (1) To examine the reasons for food insecurity in Nigeria (2) To examine the nexus between food insecurity, hunger and insecurity in Nigeria (3) To proffer solutions to the issues of food insecurity and hunger in Nigeria. Conflict theory was adopted in developing the theoretical framework for this paper. The methodology adopted was a systematic content analysis of books, journals, and internet sources while the study used only secondary data as it was a qualitative study. Having answered the objectives of the study, the researchers made the following recommendations namely; that artificial intelligence and machine learning should be deployed across the country to measure crop conditions, water stress, soil moisture etc. in order to boost agricultural productivity and food security. That post-harvest losses can be significantly reduced by adopting green nanotechnology to preserve fruits and vegetables by using sachets containing polymers which diminish the natural degradation of fruits. That solar powered cold-rooms be provided in all 774 LGAs in the country to help farmers preserve their produce. That selective breeding, direct seeding, and bio fortification should be adopted in the country interalia.

Keywords: Neglect of Agriculture, Food Insecurity, Hunger, Insecurity

INTRODUCTION

From the 1950's through to the 60's, agriculture was the backbone of Nigeria's economy. Nigeria was self-sufficient in food production and was a net exporter of food and cash crops. One recalls with nostalgia the booming days of the groundnut and cotton pyramids in the North, cocoa, timber and rubber in the West and Mid-West regions and palm plantations in the East. Unfortunately, Nigeria derailed from this great economic trajectory with the dawn of the petro-dollars economy from 1970. In concrete terms, between 1950 and 1968, agriculture accounted for about 90 percent of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings. In 1969, it declined to 55 percent. From the 1970s, specifically in 1977 this declined to 8.1 percent and by 2016 agriculture contributed less than 7 percent of foreign exchange earnings. (Alugbuo & Akpanabia, 2023), (Ucha, 2010), (Ochienta, 2014). This decline in agricultural productivity and growth since 1970, occurred simultaneously with an exponential growth in Nigeria's population from 1970 till date. Today, Nigeria's population is over 220 million people and by 2050, the country will be the third most populated in the world after India and China.

Various reasons have been adduced over the years for this scenario including government neglect and near abandonment of agriculture due to huge earnings from crude oil exports, bad and visionless leadership, corruption, fraud and lack of political will inter alia. Nigeria moved from being a large net exporter of food to become a net importer that between 2009 and 2012, the country spent over \$11 billion importing basic food items including wheat on which N635 billion was spent annually and rice on which N365 billion was spent annually, (Ilegbinosa, Watson & Ito, 2012). This neglect of agriculture in Nigeria over the past 50 years, has resulted in food insecurity largely due to poor agricultural funding, lack of basic infrastructure including storage, processing, road, railways and port facilities as well as the negative impacts of corruption and political instability. Food insecurity and food shortages have become very challenging and difficult problems for many developing countries (Oladiran, 2010) (Famogbiele, 2013).

The foregoing issues have led to hunger and malnutrition in Nigeria. This scenario of mass hunger has led to insecurity in the country. Various studies have been done on food insecurity in the past five years but none of them highlighted the hunger and hardship protests across the country from August 1- 10, 2024. This present study was done in August, 2024 during the period of the hunger and hardship protests across the country and tries to provide valuable insights into the motivations for these protests. There is a need for a study on how hunger motivated these protests and this study further predicts a violent crisis of monumental proportions if the issue of hunger is not urgently addressed. This paper starts with an introduction, followed by operationalization of concepts, then statement of the problem, objectives of the study, theoretical framework, methodology, method of data collection, followed by discussion of research objectives, conclusion and recommendations.

Operationalization of Concepts

Food insecurity: According to the (FAO, 2024) this is the condition of not having access to sufficient food or food of an adequate quality to meet one's basic needs.

According to the (USDA, 2024), it is when people do not have enough to eat and do not know where their next meal is coming from. For (Egbuna, 2001) a food insecure situation is said to exist when the demand side is not balanced with the supply side. For the purpose of this study, food insecurity is the condition where the supply of food in a country is insufficient to meet the demand.

Hunger: (FAO, 2024), described hunger as an uncomfortable or painful physical sensation caused by insufficient consumption of dietary energy.

Hunger is discomfort or pain caused by a lack of food. It is different from food insecurity, which means lack of regular access to safe and nutritious food for proper development and an active and healthy life (WFP, 2024). The (FAO, 2024) reported that around 26.5 million Nigerians are at risk of hunger in 2024.

Insecurity: According to (Achumba, Ighomereho & Akpan-Robaro, 2013), insecurity is the exact opposite of security. It denotes want of safety, want of confidence, lack of protection, danger, uncertainty, hazard, instability, trouble, being unsafe, and state of chaos. For (Beland, 2005), insecurity is "the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of

protection”. For the purpose of this study, insecurity is the inability of the state to protect lives and property.

Statement of the Problem

The issues of food insecurity, hunger and national security have become very topical in Nigeria today. The country does not produce enough food to feed its teeming population. This has led to mass hunger in the land as well as hardship. Consequently, the country is witnessing insecurity, chaos, instability and mass anger. This is witnessed in the on-going ten days of protests across the country tagged hunger and hardship protests, which have resulted in the destruction of lives and property nationwide and cost the government hundreds of billions of Naira in losses. Of the numerous studies done on food insecurity and insecurity in Nigeria, none covered the recent hunger and hardship protests. This study highlights the hunger and hardship protests across the country from August 1 – 10, 2024 as well as its impact on security in Nigeria. This is the gap that this study intends to fill as it demonstrates the interconnections of the issues of food insecurity, hunger, anger, violence and insecurity in the country.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study will be to examine the effects of the neglect of agriculture, food insecurity and hunger on insecurity in Nigeria.

The specific objectives include:

1. To examine the reasons for food insecurity in Nigeria.
2. To examine the nexus between food insecurity, hunger and insecurity in Nigeria.
3. To proffer solutions to the issues of food insecurity and hunger in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

A lot of studies and literature on food insecurity and insecurity in Nigeria were reviewed but none of these studies adopted conflict theory in developing their theoretical framework. This study adopted conflict theory and this theory helps to extend the frontiers of knowledge in this field of study. The Marxist Strand of conflict theory was adopted in developing the theoretical framework for this study. Conflict theory is a Sociological perspective that views society as a system characterized by power dynamics and the inevitable presence of conflict. The theory emphasizes the role of social inequality, competition for resources, and class struggle in shaping the social order. Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Frederick Engels (1820-1895) opined in the communist Manifesto “the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle”. In the capitalist society, Marx saw two major social classes – the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The bourgeoisie own the means of production while the proletariat subsist by selling their labour power. These two classes are ideologically divergent and diametrically opposed to each other. Marx advocated the overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat via a revolution. Applying this theory to the study, the poor, vulnerable and hungry Nigerians see the government and the ruling class as oppressive and exploitative and have reacted leading to chaos, instability, crisis, crime and insecurity in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the systematic content analysis of books, journals, periodicals and internet sources to obtain relevant materials for this study. This method was adopted because this study is essentially a qualitative study. Also this study made extensive use of secondary data which are very objective data as primary data can sometimes be subjective and introduce biasness into a study. Content analysis and secondary data help to decipher current and up to date information and data on the topic and are very useful in addressing the research objectives.

Method of Data Collection

The internet, books and journals were the sources of data collection and secondary data were used for this study.

Discussion of Research objectives

- (1) To examine the reasons for food insecurity in Nigeria.

Food insecurity is the exact opposite of food security and food security is measured with indices such as affordability, availability, quality and safety. According to the (Global Food Security Index GFSI, 2019), Nigeria ranks 94th out of 113 nations with a score of 48.4/100. Similarly according to the (Global Hunger Index (GHI), 2023) Nigeria ranks 109th out of 123 countries. All of these clearly show that Nigeria is one of the most food insecure and hungry nations on earth. This section will examine the reasons for food insecurity in Nigeria.

Critical infrastructure deficits: These include poor road network, unreliable power supply, congested ports, and dilapidated irrigation systems (Akpa, 2021). Nigeria's infrastructure budget yearly is less than 5% of the 100 billion US dollars it needs. Gaps in critical infrastructure are constraining economic growth. In 2020, Moody's estimated that Nigeria will need to invest 3 trillion US dollars over the next 30 years to plug the national infrastructure gap. Nigeria's infrastructure deficit, amounting to 30% of its GDP, falls short of the international benchmark of 70% set by the World Bank. Capital market instruments offer a compelling alternative by tapping into private sector capital. Communication and transport networks, financial services, energy, commercial facilities, food/agriculture, and vital services. These interconnected systems known as critical infrastructure, form the backbone of society. Nigeria ranks 24th in 2020 out of 54 African countries in the African Infrastructure Development index with 23.26 points, Egypt was 2nd with 88.3 points, and war-torn Libya 3rd with 82.9 point. The Global Competitiveness Index Report 2019 ranked Nigeria 130th at of 141 economics surveyed for quality infrastructure.

Failure of governance: These include corruption and embezzlement of funds and resources meant for agriculture, neglect of the sector, bureaucracy, nebulous policies and lack of political will. Aside from 1960 – 1966 when Nigeria had dedicated, visionary, selfless and transparent leaders, from 1967 until date we have had inept, visionless, directionless, greedy, corrupt and predatory leaders across all levels of governance in the country. A former British Prime Minister David Cameron was quoted as saying that "Nigeria is a fantastically corrupt country". Another former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair once said in 2023, "If the amount of money stolen from Nigeria in the past 20 years was stolen from the UK, the UK

will cease to exist”. An aspect of the corruption of our leaders is lack of rule of law. A situation where some of our leaders see themselves as being above the law is very unhealthy. The political elites still undermine the independence of the judiciary through patronage appointments and judicial administration is marked by weak enforcement capacity (Lawal & Owolabi, 2012). In addition, the lack of ideology is the tragedy of our politics since 1999. An ideology is a collection of ideas or beliefs shared by a group people. (Anekwe, 2020), opined that in Nigeria, the political elites constitute a nonproductive class who rely on the control of state structures to access economic rewards. Rather than pursue political contests within ideological frameworks, politics became a contested terrain for shallow, self-centred political and economic gains.

Lack of critical inputs: These include lack of fertilizer, quality seeds and seedlings, lack of tractors, harvesters, sprayers, as well as poor land access. Over 90% of farmers in Nigeria still use tools like hoes and cutlasses. Nigeria with 50,000 tractors translating to 5.7 tractors/100sq km or 0.27hp/hectare, which falls far short of FAO,'s recommended 1.5hp/hectare making Nigeria one of the least mechanized farming countries in the world. Tractor use in Egypt is as high as 57% and 70% in South Africa.

Weak market access and poor value addition: These problems include poor storage facilities as well as lack of processing and value addition facilities. This result in humongous post-harvest losses for farmers.

Insecurity: The hydra-headed monster of insecurity in the various geo-political zones of the country has negatively impacted food security. From the Northwest and Northeast geopolitical zones banditry, kidnappings, terrorism as well as the Boko Haram and other terrorist groups have disrupted agriculture, local communities where millions of people have been sacked and dislocated and have become internally displaced persons. (Campbell & Harwood, 2018), Since 2014, the deadly Fulani herdsmen have been masquerading themselves as cattle herders, but in actual sense are terrorists, killers, murderers, armed robbers carrying out militia attacks against farming communities destroying and vandalizing all forms of economic activities and committing all kinds of atrocities against innocent lives and souls (KwaJa & Ademola, 2018). “The support given to these killer herdsmen by some socio cultural groups such as The Miyayati Allah Kautal Hore, The Miyatti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria, and the Fulani Nationality Movement as well as the silent support of the Nigerian President, Mohammadu Buhari, is the main source of courage for the deadly Fulani herdsmen”. In addition, despite the view of many Nigerians that the presidency was protecting these Fulani terrorists, nothing was done to stop their terrorist activities (The International Crisis Group, 2017) and (Amnesty International, 2018)

In the North-central, states like Benue, Plateau, and Kogi have witnessed very violent, bloody and deadly clashes between farmers and cattle herders resulting in the deaths of thousands of farmers and the wanton destruction of farms and crops. In addition, the Southsouth, Southeast and Southwest parts of Nigeria have all witnessed deadly conflicts between farmers and herders resulting in massive disruptions in food production across the country. This monster called insecurity has greatly contributed to food insecurity in Nigeria today as farmers are afraid to go to their farms.

Poor access to credit facilities: Most farmers in Nigeria are poor and do not have access to the required financial capital for agriculture. This is because most banks in Nigeria are

unwilling to extend credit facilities to farmers majorly because these farmers do not have the required collateral to back up the loans. In 2016, total bank lending to the agriculture sector was only 1.4 percent of total bank lending (Ugwuede, 2016).

Nebulous and inconsistent agricultural policies: Over the past five decades in Nigeria, with successive governments coming to power, there has been inconsistency in government agricultural policies, which has impacted negatively on agriculture. While one regime may encourage local production of food in Nigeria, another one may come in, open the borders completely, and encourage massive importation. These inconsistencies hamper productivity.

Unstable input and output prices: Another major problem affecting food production is the rising cost of major farm inputs. Average prices of major farm inputs such as hoe, machet, sprayer, tractor, and agrochemicals have been rising over the years. This is due to unstable macroeconomic policy actions leading to inflationary pressures, high interest rates and volatile exchange rate (Oni, 2013).

The nexus between food insecurity, hunger and insecurity in Nigeria

Nigeria has become one of the most food insecure and hungry nations on the planet. Going by the (Global Food Security Index (GFSI), 2019) Nigeria scored 94th out of 113 nations with a score of 48.4/100 and the (Global Hunger Index, 2023), Nigeria was 109th out of 125 countries. These are very appalling statistics indeed and indicate that things have indeed fallen apart. Over the past ten years in Nigeria, life has become increasingly more miserable and living standards have steadily fallen drastically. With the Tinubu government coming to power, he removed petroleum subsidy and floated the Naira. With these two policies in place petrol prices hit the roof affecting the prices of goods and services. Also with the floating of the Naira, 1 dollar today exchanges for over N1,600 and 1 British pound goes for over N2000. These two policies have compounded the misery, hardship, sufferings, and poverty in the land. Nigerians have been reduced to destitutes in their own country. Also the rate of food inflation as at March, 2024 was 40.01 percent compared with 24.45 percent recorded in March, 2023. This is an increase of 15.56 percent points. These figures are from the (NBS, 2024). Never in the history of Nigeria have we had this kind of food inflation. This has escalated the hunger, anger, pain, distress, anxiety, dejection, misery and suffering of Nigerians. All of these have culminated in the mass protests tagged hunger and hardship protests across the country. As at the time of writing this paper, August 4, 2024, these protests have resulted in the loss of lives and properties in different parts of the country. The federal and state governments as well as private citizens have lost hundreds of billions of Naira to the protests. Shops and businesses have been vandalized and looted with some faceless elements even calling for regime change similar to the ones in the Republics of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso with some of the protesters hoisting the Russian flag in some parts of the country. This shows indeed that “a hungry man is an angry man”. With mass hunger in Nigeria, we have experienced chaos, anger, disorder, instability, anarchy and insecurity. The (Global Peace Index, 2023) did a survey of 163 countries and Nigeria emerged 144th in the world and 37th in Africa. This shows that Nigeria is one of the most insecure, unsafe disorderly, chaotic, unstable and crisis ridden countries in the world.

The solutions to the issues of food insecurity and hunger in Nigeria

1. Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning should be deployed across the country to measure crop conditions, water stress, soil moisture etcetera in order to boost agricultural productivity and food security.
2. Post-harvest losses can be significantly reduced by adopting green nanotechnology to preserve fruits and vegetables by using sachets containing polymers which diminish the natural degradation of fruits. The sachets work by inhibiting the release of the phospholipase enzyme responsible for deterioration with age. Adding a sachet to a box of fruits can help it stay fresh longer and maintain nutrient quality for up to 33 days. This technology can help to preserve mangoes, bananas, oranges, berries etc.
3. Due to the epileptic electricity supply in Nigeria, solar powered cold-rooms should be provided in all 774 LGAs in the country to help farmers to preserve their produce.
4. Selective breeding, direct seeding and biofortification should be implemented in the country to boost food security.
5. Also genetic engineering, hydroponics, aquaponics and aeroponics should be implemented.
6. **The need to increase budgetary allocation to agriculture:** For decades, the federal government has been paying lip service to agriculture and talking about diversifying the nation's economy. But the bottom line is that action speaks louder than words. The African Union recommends that African countries allocate at least 10% of their annual budget to agriculture but Nigeria has fallen far short of this recommendation.

Table 1: Federal budgetary Allocation to Agriculture in Percentage of Total Budget from 2012-2024

Year	Federal Budgetary Allocation %
2012	1.6
2013	1.7
2014	1.4
2015	0.9
2016	1.3
2017	1.8
2018	3.2
2019	1.6
2020	0.9
2021	1.5
2022	1.8
2023	1.05
2024	1.32

Source: Researcher's Compilation from The National Bureau of Statistics

These meagre budgetary allocations to agriculture cannot help to meet and address food insecurity in Nigeria. There is a dire need to invest more in agriculture.

Conclusion

Nigeria has over 84 million hectares of arable land, abundant water resources, a clement weather and a teeming population of able-bodied youths. Therefore this country has no

business with food insecurity and hunger. With concerted efforts by the three tiers of government, the private sector and the citizenry, Nigeria can produce enough food to feed her citizens and even export to other African countries. We can also take advantage of the entire value chain of crops like cassava, yams, cocoa, palm produce, rubber etc, when we add value to them to create millions of jobs and generate income and wealth for Nigerians.

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