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# Poverty, Insecurity and its Implications on Democracy in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** Nigeria's democracy has been plagued by pervasive poverty and debilitating security challenges, which have undermined the country's socio-economic development and stability. This study examines the intricate relationships between poverty, insecurity, and democracy in Nigeria, highlighting the ways in which poverty has fueled insecurity and compromised democratic governance. The study is based on qualitative research approach, utilizing secondary sources of data which includes journals, official reports, as well as relevant textbooks. The study utilized qualitative content method of data interpretation and analysis. Relative Deprivation Theory was adopted as a framework of analysis. The study found that the prevailing unpleasant socio-material conditions pertaining to survival, economic deprivation, structural inequities, and governance deficits in the country led to Boko Haram terrorism, Fulani herdsmen attacks, sectarian violence, political/electoral violence, ethnic, communal and religious conflicts, Niger-Delta crisis, kidnapping and armed robbery. These anomalies are hindrances to active economic activities and democratic processes. The study concludes that addressing poverty and insecurity is critical to consolidating democracy and achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. The study recommends the reduction in poverty through the provision of employment opportunities and the provision of basic infrastructure and services that are efficient, improving on synergy between security organizations, there should be greater investment in human development, increase recurrent and especially capital expenditures on internal security,

workable anti-terrorism measures, build strong and legitimate institutions that can safely curb the menace of insecurity, there should be good governance by been transparent and accountable to the people, and genuine fight against corruption among others.

**Keywords:** Democracy, Implication, Insecurity, Poverty, Nigeria

## Introduction

The security of life and property remains significant to the socio-economic survival of any given society. Security is the base of everything that man desires. With security, the aspiration, worth and dreams of citizens will be attained. More so, it is only when there is adequate security that there can be peace and without peace, people live in fear, not able to go about their legitimate duties. Without security, social, economic, and political achievements cannot be attained. Therefore, it is the responsibility of government that there should be adequate security.

The security challenges bedevilling Nigeria have far reaching consequences on the practice of democracy in Nigeria. This is because civil liberties, popular participation, and development of any kind cannot thrive in the atmosphere of conflicts, confusions, wars, bickering and the likes. About twenty-three years after the return of democracy in 1999 in Nigeria, the hope by many citizens that democratic governance will ensure liberty, free and fair competition, the flourishing of political rights and freedom, institutional autonomy, and will improve social and economic condition of the people has remained a mirage (Alexander & Ogoh, 2023). This is because of the persistent rise in poverty in the country. Again, rising of insecurity is on the verge of being Nigeria's heritage as attacks occurs on daily basis. These include but not limited to the activities of Boko Haram, banditry, ethno-religious

conflict, farmer-herders conflict, etc. These anomalies are hindrances to active economic activities and democratic processes. While several factors could have contributed to Nigeria's security challenges today, there is no doubt that pervasive poverty among the populace is central in attempting to explain the problem of insecurity.

This paper examines the relationship between poverty and insecurity with a view to determining their implications on democracy in Nigeria. The paper is segmented into eight sections: introduction; conceptual framework and literature review; theoretical framework; methodology; analysis and discussion; findings; policy implication and recommendations; and conclusion.

## Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

### *Poverty in Nigeria*

Poverty means different things to different scholars. However, poverty is the lack of financial power (material resources) to cater for human needs. A situation where levels of income are insufficient to provide the basic necessities of life (Gilbert & Barigbon, 2015). This indicates that one could be considered financially incapacitated for not having income to meet with his or her daily consumption. The term 'poverty' is also used more broadly, however, to encompass other fundamental dimensions of human life and development beyond income and consumption especially the aspect of deprivation with respect to education and

health also known as human poverty. According to the United Nations (1998), poverty:

..is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to; not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living on marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation (Ucha, 2010, p. 46).

Implicit in the above definitions is that poverty is a state of lack and often a consequence of social exclusion- 'a state in which individuals are unable to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life, as well as the process leading to and sustaining such a state' (Birchall, 2019, p.4). That is, a situation where some people are deliberately denied access to national wealth or resources that make life worthwhile due to their social backgrounds.

In Nigeria, despite its endowment of natural resources, arable land and human capital, ranks among the world's poorest. 40.1% of total population were classified as poor -about 83 million people, live below the poverty line of ₦137,430 (about \$381.75) per year (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020; World Bank, 2020). Borgen Magazine (2020) also alluded that with about 86.9 million people living in severe poverty, which is about 50% of its entire population, Nigeria is the poverty capital of the world. It exceeded India with the largest rate of people living in extreme poverty.

Nigeria's GDP grew by 3.46% in Q4 2023, slightly down from 3.52% in the same quarter of 2022. The manufacturing sector grew by 1.38%, and the agricultural sector grew by 14.94% year-on-year (World Bank, 2023; Kimpact Development Initiative, 2025).

According to the recent household survey data from National Bureau of Statistics, 30.9% of Nigerians lived below the international extreme poverty line of \$2.15 per person per day (2017 PPP) in 2018/19 before the COVID-19 pandemic. Nigeria remains spatially unequal. The poverty rate in northern geopolitical zones was 46.5% in 2018/19, compared with 13.5% for southern ones. Inequality measured by the Gini index was estimated at 35.1 in 2018/19. Since 2018/19, an additional 42 million people fell into poverty so that more than half of all Nigerians (54%) are estimated to live in poverty in 2024, based on World Bank projections (World Bank, 2025). It is hard if not impossible to detach the causes of poverty from its effects. Generally, poverty results from interplay of many factors such as corruption, marginalization, natural conditions and disasters, unemployment, bad governance, poor infrastructure, wars and unending conflicts, the lack of capacity to influence social processes, public policy, and resources allocation, non-diversification of the economy, income inequality, laziness, and a poor education system as some of the key factors contributing to poverty in Nigeria.

Poverty manifests in unemployment, hunger, poor health, poor standard of education, low self-esteem, low economic status, lack of security and exclusion from civic and political life which contradict the fundamentals of democracy (Oluwatusin & Abolarin-Egbebi, 2015). Poverty affects mostly young children, pregnant mothers, the

elderly, rural area, and marginal urban zones and those groups of people who have not been integrated into their own society and among the world are those who lack resources and capacity to organize themselves to achieve meaningful development by way of agitating hash government policies (Aliyu & Chukwudi, 2015). Additionally, poverty creates frustration, loss of hope/prospects and value for life, loss of meaning for life and purpose of living, it creates disillusionment about morality - makes people compromise on moral values or abandon moral values completely (Oluwatusin & Abolarin-Egbebi, 2015; Alexander & Magaji, 2021).

### ***Insecurity in Nigeria***

The term “security” has no universally acceptable definition. However, it is the condition or feeling of safety from harm or danger, the defence, protection and preservation of core values and the absence of threats to acquire values, stable and steady income), predictability of daily life (knowing what to expect), protection from crime (feeling safe), and freedom from psychological harm (safety or protection from emotional stress which results from the assurance or knowing that one is wanted, accepted, loved and protected in one’s community or neighbourhood and by people around (Igbuzor, 2011).

Insecurity on the other hand has myriads of connotations. It signifies danger, hazard, uncertainty, lack of protection, and lack of safety. According to Beland (2005, p.4), insecurity is ‘the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection’. To Buzan (1991), insecurity is the political, economic, social and environmental threat that affect the individual as well as the state at national and international levels. It refers to lack or inadequate

freedom from danger. This implies that insecurity is absence of peace, order, and inadequate freedom from danger. Similarly, 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 (Achumba, Ighomeroho & Akpor, 2013).

Insecurity is not spontaneous. They are often occasioned by criminal. Since Nigeria’s transition to democracy in 1999, the security landscape has deteriorated significantly. While conventional crimes have long been a concern, the rise of violent extremism, insurgency, and other forms of militancy, such as ethno-religious conflicts, armed robbery, kidnapping, hostage taking, banditry, insurgency, terrorism, herders/farmers clashes and indigene-settler dichotomy, etc. has complicated the situation.

The Institute for Economics and Peace (2022) reports an estimated 1.9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states. This is part of the larger 2.7 million IDPs in the Lake Chad Basin. According to the 2022 Global Terrorism Index, Nigeria ranks sixth among 163 countries in terms of terrorism, with a score of 8.233. While terrorist attacks increased by 49% between 2020 and 2021, the number of deaths from terrorism decreased to 448 in 2021, the lowest in a decade. ISWA was responsible for 36% of attacks, surpassing Boko Haram, which accounted for only 8%. The decline of Boko Haram continued, with a 77% decrease in deaths attributed to the group in 2021. In 2024, Global Peace Index reports that Nigeria is ranked the number 8 on the global Terrorism Index. In the Northeast of the country, Boko Haram suffered setback with killing of its leader, while in the Islamic State in West Africa

expanded their presence and influence, building ties with local communities, criminal gangs, and herder -affiliated militia. Armed banditry has caused devastating losses in Nigeria's northern states. Between 2011 and 2019, over 6,000 people were killed, 4,983 women were widowed, and 25,050 children were orphaned in Zamfara State alone. Additionally, over 190,000 people were displaced, and extensive destruction of property, livestock, and infrastructure occurred (West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), 2020). Between 2001 and 2018, herder-farmer conflict has displaced about 300,000 people across four states. This conflict resulted to a 20.7% food price inflation between 2020 and 2021 in Nigeria. Thus, a threat to food security in the country (Reliefweb, 2021). During the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, the North West, North East, and North Central regions recorded 172, 146, and 111 fatalities, respectively. Benue, Borno, Kaduna, Rivers, and Zamfara states suffered the highest number of casualties. Election day itself was particularly volatile, accounting for 15% of incidents and 20% of fatalities (Adekola, 2021). During the 2023 General Elections, Center for Democracy and Development, opined that a total of 109 election-related deaths were recorded across Nigeria in the build-up to the 2023 general elections (Human Right Watch, 2024). According to United Nations Children's Fund Nigeria (UNICEF) (2023), 2,000 direct conflict-related deaths (adults and children) were recorded per year between 2010-2013; 8,000 in 2014; 9,000 in 2015; and 3,000 in 2021. 2,205 children were killed (1,209) or maimed (996) between 2017 and 2021; and in 2021, 2.6 million people were displaced internally in North East Nigeria. The year 2020 has recorded increase in child malnutrition by 21.5%.

While 920,000 children were affected with malnutrition in 2020, 300,000 children were affected with acute malnutrition in 2021. School enrolment decreased between 2013 and 2018; primary school enrolment decreased by 6.66%; and secondary school enrolment decreased by 12.69%. Between 2017 and 2021, 5,537 children were recruited by armed groups. The periods (2017-2021) recorded 9,131 grave violations. Annually, there were 244 child abductions in 2017; 55 in 2019; and 211 in 2017 respectfully. In terms of rape or sexual violence against children, 151 cases in 2017, 7 cases in 2019 and 53 cases in 2021 were recorded. These security challenges constitute threats to the survival of democracy and governance in Nigeria.

### ***Democracy and Governance in Nigeria***

As it is with the concept of poverty and security, democracy is also a relative term. However, the term democracy is the sovereign power of the people. According to Schumpeter, democracy is: a political method, that is to say, a certain type of institutional arrangement for arriving at political, legislative and administrative decision... a method by which the individual acquires the power to participate in decisions by means of a competitive struggle for all the people's vote (Schumpeter, 2003).

Similarly, Lipset averred that, 'Democracy is a political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials and a social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decision by choosing among contenders for political office' (Mahajan, 2013, p.719). In spite of the differences in conceptualization, note that democracy has principles. These include:

- i. Popular Sovereignty: the

- supreme power to rule rests with the electorates.
- ii. Popular Representation: This entails the political representatives serving the interest of the people.
  - iii. Popular Participation: This implies the active involvement of both leaders and followers in the political.
  - iv. Rule of Law: This entails the supremacy and universal applicability of the law.
  - v. Civil Liberty: guaranteeing of basic freedoms such as right to life, right to property, freedom to speech, freedom to the press, and mechanisms for actualizing them.

Governance is a set of values, policies and institutions through which the society manages economic, political as well as social processes at different levels, on the basis of interaction among the government, civil society and private sector (Ayuba, 2018). According to World Bank (1994), governance is the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. UNDP (2007) defines governance as the 'exercise of power through a country's economic, social, and political institutions in which institutions represent the organizational rules and routines, formal laws, and informal norms that together shape the incentives of public policy-makers, overseers, and providers of public services' (Nwankwo & Udeobasi, 2017, p. 68).

The above discourse suggests that democratic governance is a system of government where institutions function according to democratic processes and norms, both internally and in their interaction with other institutions (Johnson & Salau, 2019). According to

the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1997), democratic governance 'ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of development resources.' Democratic governance enables the protection of peoples through institutional safeguards, equality before the law, and the advancement of human rights. The transition beyond the formal realm of electoral politics to the substantive one of enabling human rights, physical well-being and human development defines the credibility of democracy. Accordingly, democracy emphasizes security (the protection of people from grave threats to their lives, safety from harm and violent conflict, and empowerment against such social threats as disease or crime). However, insecurity lie in poverty (exclusion and lack of access to power and resources).

In Nigeria, democratic governance started taking shape in 1999, when the military was disengaged from the polity to institutionalize democracy. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended in 2011, articulates the fundamental principles underpinning Nigerian democracy. Section 14(1) asserts that 'the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a state based on the principles of democracy and social justice,' encompassing elements of accountability, transparency, effective leadership, enhanced participation, the protection of life and property, and improved standards of living for the populace (Alexander & Magaji, 2021).

### ***Linking Poverty, Insecurity, and Democracy***

The intricate relationship between poverty, insecurity, and democracy is a pressing concern in many societies.

Poverty fuels insecurity, which in turn causes poverty. These vicious (poverty and insecurity) undermines democratic institutions and processes. Conversely, democratic governance provides a framework for addressing poverty and promoting stability.

According to Zoaka (2020) poverty is the primary driver of Nigeria's significant insecurity challenges. Emma, David and Iroko (2017) opined that poverty and insecurity are deeply entrenched, interconnected challenges hindering Nigeria's social, political, and economic progress. Ndubuisi-Okolo and Theresa (2019) specifically noted that insecurity and poverty are major obstacles on industrialization and sustainable economic development in Nigeria. Shehu and Baiyi (2020) opined that poverty, unemployment, corruption, inadequate education, laziness, and environmental degradation poses significant challenges to human security across various dimensions, such as economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security.

Akinyetun (2021) explored the interconnectedness of poverty, cybercrime, and national security in Nigeria. The study showed that poverty is a primary motivator for cybercrime, which in turn poses a significant threat to national security. In other words, the widespread poverty, deprivation, and inequality drive many young Nigerians to engage in criminal activities. Furthermore, cybercrime compromises national security by exposing individuals to various forms of harm, including violence, espionage, stalking, and manipulations. Similarly, to these findings, Olojede and Oni (2019) in analyzing the effects of widespread poverty on national security in Nigeria

argues that inequality destabilizes security. The study highlighted the striking disparity between Nigeria's affluent elite and the impoverished majority, which has serious implications for national security. This wealth gap fuels poverty, unemployment, and crime, ultimately undermining Nigeria's stability and development. In examining the evolving threats to Nigeria's national security, focusing on the Niger Delta crisis, Boko Haram terrorism, and herdsmen-farmer conflicts in Nigeria, Orkar and Shaminja (2019) contended that the emerging security challenges stem from unemployment, poverty, ineffective governance, corruption, and inadequate military preparedness.

According to Adamu and Muhammad (2021), insecurity like armed banditry has a destructive impact on the socio-economic development. Since 2011, Zamfara state has experienced significant social and economic decline due to persistent bandit attacks on communities and villages. These attacks have left residents vulnerable, displaced, and unable to engage in economic activities. Additionally, people in urban areas can no longer visit their relatives in villages or access their farmlands and forests, resulting in food scarcity and loss of livestock. Most tragically, numerous lives have been lost, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. Similarly, to the findings of Adamu and Muhammad (2021), Ajibola (2016), while analyzing the impact of insecurity on economic growth in Nigeria, showed that 90% of the variation in Nigeria's Real GDP can be attributed to security expenditure, corruption, poverty, unemployment, and inflation. The findings on examining the impact of insecurity on Nigeria's socio-economic development by Krokeyi and Dadi (2018) showed that insecurity has increased over time, posing a significant

threat to lives, property, and economic growth. Lack of equality and justice, poor economic conditions, high unemployment, political and religious instability, ethnic and tribal tensions are the several underlying factors contributing to insecurity in the country. These factors have resulted in loss of lives, properties, hinders economic activities, discourages investors, and stifles Nigeria's development.

In constellation of the above literature, note that weakness(es) in any of the trio can undermine the others. For instance, poverty leads to insecurity as individuals and groups resort to crime or violence to meet their basic needs. Insecurity in turn exacerbate poverty by disrupting economic activities, destroying infrastructure and deterring investment. Therefore, poverty and insecurity undermine democracy by creating an environment where citizens feel threatened, and the rule of law is challenged. This leads to authoritarian tendencies, as government may prioritize security over democratic principles and human rights. Poverty strained democracy as economically disenfranchised citizens may demand more from their government, potentially leading to instability. Democracy is a form of governance that provides a framework for addressing the problems of poverty and insecurity. This is because citizens make great contributions to the governing processes, where decisions are made to represent their interests. This implies that under a democratic system, the interest of the masses rule. If this applies, poverty and insecurity which is ravaging the country would be reduced to a manageable level. However, poor or weak democratic governance can exacerbate poverty and insecurity by undermining accountability, fostering corruption and mismanagement of

resources, neglecting marginalised communities, weakening institutions and rule of law, limiting citizens' participation and representation.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The paper adopts Relative Deprivation Theory to investigate the relationship between poverty and insecurity and its implications on democracy in Nigeria. The main premise of the theory is that violent behaviour is triggered by an individual's inability to fulfil their needs within society, and this gap results in frustration which ends in aggression expressed as violence. Ted Robert Gurr, in his work *Why men rebel* defines relative deprivation as 'the tension that develops from a discrepancy between the 'ought' and the 'is' of collective value satisfaction, and this disposes men to violence' (1970, p.23). When the current situation violates expectations created by past experiences, people are more prone to feel politically alienated and to participate in collective protests (Gurr, 1970). In other words, relative deprivation is a state of perceived discrepancy between individuals' or groups' value expectations (what they believe they deserve) and their value capabilities (what they can attain). This perceived gap can lead to feelings of frustration, discontent, and potentially, collective violence or civil strife. Gurr's theory suggests that relative deprivation is a key driver of social unrest and political instability.

In Nigeria, poverty and insecurity are intertwined. Insecurity rises with poverty because, poverty impairs the people's ability to provide their basic necessities. This constitutes a major threat to citizens' liberty, and national development. The un-attainment of the basic human wants of the Nigeria citizenry especially in the uninterrupted practice of democracy since 1999 till date, evidently, led to



frustration, agitation, discontentment and disillusionment leading to militancy, insurgency, terrorism, kidnapping, etc. Once there is negative increase in the socioeconomic and political indicators such as unemployment, high level of illiteracy, high inflation, bad governance, lack of freedom and violation of human rights amongst others, there will be tendency for agitation leading to destruction of man and other resources which has unprecedented effect on the economy and democratic processes as it is in Nigeria. Therefore, addressing the root causes of poverty and insecurity, including unemployment, illiteracy, and poor governance, is essential to promoting democratic development and stability in Nigeria.

### **Methodology**

The methodology employed in this study is based on a qualitative research approach, utilizing secondary data sources to examine the relationship between poverty, insecurity, and democracy in Nigeria. The study relies on existing literature, including: Academic journals, books, reports, and reputable online sources. The study employs qualitative content analysis to analyze the data. The analysis involves identifying themes, patterns, and relationships between poverty, insecurity, and democracy in Nigeria.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

Nigeria received her independence from British colonial rule in 1960. The country enjoyed six years of civilian rule from 1960-1966 before the first military intervention in politics led by Major General Kaduna Ezeogwu. From 1966 till date, Nigeria had intermittent military rule except for 1979-1983 under Shehu Shagari and the transitional government of Ernest Shonekan August 26th, 1993-17th November 1993. The country returned to democratic rule from 1999-

till date without any military intervention (Popoola, Egharevba & Fayomi, 2021). The implications of poverty and insecurity on democracy in Nigeria are far-reaching and devastating. Nigeria's democratic system, established in 1999, has failed to deliver on its promises of economic growth, peace, and stability. Instead, the country has witnessed a significant increase in poverty, inequality, unemployment, and insecurity.

Poverty is a significant contributor to insecurity in Nigeria. With a large population living in abject poverty, many individuals are forced to turn to violent means to survive. This has fuelled the rise of social vices, including kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, and militancy, which have severely impacted both security and the economy. Poverty and insecurity have undermined Nigeria's democratic governance: the government's inability to provide basic necessities like security, education, and healthcare has eroded trust in democratic institutions. This has led to widespread disillusionment and frustration among citizens, who feel that democracy has failed to deliver on its promises (Alexander & Magaji, 2021). Similarly, Ighodalo (2012) is of the view that poverty is a principal cause of political, social and economic conflict in the country. Poverty is antithetical to the principles and core values of democracy. Poverty in the midst of plenty creates disaffection among the populace and leads them toward violent behaviour. Its constraints the ability of the people to make independent choices and participate actively in decision making. It reduces their self-esteem and ability to extract accountability from those they elect.

Insecurity has had a debilitating impact on Nigeria's economy and society. The Boko Haram insurgency, for example,

has displaced millions of people, destroyed infrastructure, and disrupted economic activity. The rise in kidnapping and armed robbery has also created a climate of fear, making it difficult for businesses to operate and for citizens to go about their daily lives. According to UNHCR (2020), as of 2019, over 3.3 million Nigerians have been displaced in north-eastern Nigeria alone, not to mention other parts of the country. Similarly, according to the Internally Displaced Monitoring Center (2020), a total of 2,583,000 people has been displaced internally in Nigeria by conflict and violence as of 31 December 2019. This has not only caused more humanitarian crisis or pressure on social protection programmes on the government, but worsened the already poor human capital in the country. The Nigerian economy is smaller than it would have been had there been no conflict. 2008-2021 cumulative losses appropriately \$100 billion. Cumulative losses by 2030 (even if conflict ended now) amount to \$150-200 billion. Further cumulative losses by 2030 due to lost educational opportunities amount to \$15 billion. The effect of reduced school enrolment on per capita growth is - 0.547% points. The periods (2017-2021) recorded 70 attacks on schools and hospitals. In 2018, there were more than 1,400 attacks on schools. Sharp increase in food insecurity since 2015, with 21.4% of the population experiencing severe food insecurity by 2019 (UNICEF, 2023). Investing in human development is crucial for a healthy democracy. Human development is the process of expanding people's freedoms and opportunities, improving their well-being, and enhancing their capabilities. It encompasses health, education, standard of living, and empowerment. These enhances people's quality of life, reduces

disparities, promotes social justice, and enables the people to make choices and take control of their lives. A strong democracy facilitates better human development outcomes, such as more equitable access to resources and opportunities.

Furthermore, human development enhances the development of democracy by protecting citizens' rights, ensuring accountability, and providing opportunities for participation in decision making processes. Conversely, as societies achieve higher levels of human development, they often demand more democratic governance. In Nigeria, however, Human Development Index (HDI) value for 2019 is 0.539- which put the country in the low human development category positioning it at 161 out of 189 countries and territories. Between 2005 and 2019, Nigeria's HDI value increased from 0.465 to 0.539, an increase of 15.9%. Between 1990 and 2019, Nigeria's life expectancy at birth increased by 8.8 years, mean years of schooling increased by 1.4 years and expected years of schooling increased by 3.3 years. Nigeria's Gross National Income (GNI) per capita increased by about 58.0% between 1990 and 2019 (UNDP, 2020).

The poor HDI record in Nigeria hindered the effectiveness of democratic institutions, making them more susceptible to corruption and manipulation. To corroborate this assertion, Transparency International reported that Nigeria scored 26 points out of 100 on the 2024 Corruption Perception Index. Corruption Index in Nigeria averaged 21.64 points from 1996 until 2024, reaching an all time high of 28.00 points in 2016 and a record low of 6.90 points in 1996 (Transparency International, 2025). The lack of access to the basic needs like education, healthcare,

and low standard of living makes citizens less likely to participate in the democratic processes, leading to disconnect between the government and the people.

No meaningful social and economic development can take place in an environment of insecurity, violence and terror. Such environment can never appeal to foreign investors as a good place to do business. Insecurity has impeded economic activities: obstructed market and trading development, shattered the productive assets, thwarted investment, and restricted the trust between/among market actors. These has also increased the level of poverty and negatively impacted the various sectors of the economy of Nigeria (Mercy Corps, 2020). Insecurity in Nigeria have ensured a steady national underdevelopment and reduction in inflow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). FDI plays a crucial role in promoting growth and development in host countries by bringing in new technologies, skills, and capital. It bridges the gap in domestic savings, foreign exchange, and government revenue, thereby supporting economic development. Through foreign investment, local economies can benefit from knowledge transfer, capacity building, and access to cutting-edge technology, driving innovation and growth. In the first half of 2024, however, Nigeria's FDI accounted for only 2.5% of the country's total capital imports, a significant decrease from previous periods. FDI in Nigeria has experienced fluctuations, with a high of 2.5% in December 2012 and a low of -0.7% in March 2024 (CEIC, 2024).

FDI into Nigeria in the second quarter of 2024 dropped to \$29.83m, marking the lowest level ever recorded based on available data up to 2013. An analysis of data from the latest capital importation report by the National Bureau of

Statistics shows that the FDI dropped by 65.33% compared to the \$86.03m recorded in the same period last year. It also dropped by 74.97% from the \$119.18m reported in the preceding quarter of 2024 (Sami, 2024). This indicates a challenging investment climate. Consequently, the government has spent billions combating insurgency, diverting funds that could have been invested in infrastructure, creating a business-friendly environment, and addressing pressing issues like poverty, unemployment, and environmental degradation.

Undoubtedly, for any democracy to thrive there must be among many other things the presence of a meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and organized groups, especially political parties for effective position of governmental powers at regular intervals, excluding the use of force. Also, to democracy, is a high level of civil and political liberties, highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies at least through regular free, fair, credible and peaceful elections. However, electoral process is still in sham because there has been outright disregard for the rules and regulations that are supposed to guide the process (Alexander & Ogoh, 2023). Thus, election violence in Nigeria overtime have prevented the country from adhering to these principles, and subsequently has negatively affected the country's democratic development in the destruction of lives and properties, promotes electoral malpractices, disregard of the rule of law, denial of popular participation, disorganisation of electoral process, and promotion of thuggery and proliferation of arms (Adekola, 2021). On this vein, Alexander and Ogoh (2023) posit that poverty made vote buying and selling, and electoral

violence to be prevalent in the Nigerian polity. This has further affected the level of political participation. The poor level of involvement in the political activities of Nigeria by its citizens has become a demobilising force for democratic political participation.

From the above discussion, succinctly note that the relationship between poverty and insecurity suggests that addressing poverty is crucial to mitigating insecurity. This finding supports the relative-deprivation theory, which posits that frustration from poverty can lead to aggressive behavior. Poverty and insecurity undermine democracy by creating an environment of fear, anxiety, and instability. This threatens the legitimacy and effectiveness of democratic institutions, making it challenging to promote good governance and development. Poor people, especially youths, are more likely to engage in militia activities, kidnapping, and other crimes due to frustration and lack of economic opportunities.

### Findings

- i. The study reveals a strong relationship between poverty and insecurity in Nigeria, indicating that poverty exacerbates insecurity. This also suggest that addressing poverty can help mitigate insecurity.
- ii. Poverty and insecurity erode trust in government institutions and the democratic process. That is, when citizens feel that their government is unable to provide basic necessities like security and economic opportunities, they become disillusioned with democracy;
- iii. Poverty create fertile ground for extremist groups to recruit members and spread their ideologies, leading to increased

- iv. violence and instability, further undermining democracy; Poverty and insecurity discourage citizens from participating in civic activities, leading to low voter turnout, decreased participation in protests and demonstrations, and reduced contact with representatives;
- v. Poverty undermine the effectiveness of democratic institutions, such as the judiciary, legislature, and executive, which can lead to a breakdown in the rule of law and the protection of human rights.
- vi. The study upholds the assumptions of the relative-deprivation theory, which posits that frustration from poverty can lead to aggressive behavior, including violent crimes and militancy.
- vii. Insecurity undermines democracy by creating an environment of fear, anxiety, and instability, which threatens the very existence of the state.
- viii. Poor people, especially youths, are more likely to engage in militia activities, kidnapping, and other crimes due to frustration and lack of economic opportunities.
- ix. Corruption is a significant obstacle to effective functioning of security agencies and governance in Nigeria, exacerbating insecurity.
- x. Democracy can be an instrument for poverty reduction in Nigeria, but its effectiveness depends on good governance, accountability, and implementation of policies that benefit the poor.

## Recommendations

By policy implications, addressing poverty is critical to mitigating insecurity and promoting democracy. Security reforms should prioritize addressing the root causes of insecurity, including poverty and corruption. Good governance, accountability, and transparency are essential for promoting democracy and development. Investing in youth development programs and creating economic opportunities can help reduce poverty and insecurity.

The study thus recommends the reduction in poverty and inequality through the provision of employment opportunities and the provision of basic infrastructure and services that are efficient, improving on synergy between security organizations, there should be greater investment in human development, increase recurrent and especially capital expenditures on internal security, workable anti-terrorism measures, build strong and legitimate institutions that can safely curb the menace of insecurity, there should be good governance by been transparent and accountable to the people, and genuine fight against corruption among others.

## Conclusion

Democracy in Nigeria is poised to provide liberty, free and fair competition, the flourishing of political rights and freedom, institutional autonomy, and social cum economic condition of the people. However, this study has shown that poverty and insecurity have negative consequences on the development of any nation. The menace is due to the prevailing unpleasant socio-economic conditions pertaining to survival, economic deprivation, structural inequities, environmental degradation and governance deficits in the country that made the people poor, led to insecurity in the form of Boko Haram

terrorism, Fulani herdsmen attacks, sectarian violence, political violence/assassinations, electoral violence, ethnic, communal and religious conflicts, Niger-Delta crisis, kidnapping and armed robbery. These anomalies are hindrances to active economic activities and democratic processes. This is an indication that poverty and insecurity are intertwined in a vicious cycle. While poverty creates an environment in which insecurity thrive, insecurity exacerbates poverty by disrupting economic activity and displacing communities.

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