



Insecurity And Socio-Economic Development of Rural Communities: Edo State in Focus (2018-2025)

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ABSTRACT

This research focused on insecurity and socio-economic development of rural communities in Edo State. There has been increase in farmers/herders clashes over the years; until recently, kidnapping become the other of the day. The researchers adopted mixed method (positivist and interpretive methodology to unravel the causes and effect of insecurity in the state using two community from two local government area each in the three senatorial district of Edo State. it was discovered that bad governance has led to this security challenges and as a result many lives has break lost as well as properties. There is a sharp increase in the insecurity situation in Edo State in this present administration. The cause of increased insecurity in Edo State is the weak institutional structure both at the local and state level. The traditional rulers should be up and doing the right thing, the security architecture that the state governor met should be improved upon and not a total dismantling of the security architecture.

Keywords: Insecurity, Rural Communities, Development, Kidnapping, Urban Communities

I. Background to the Study

It is arguable from time immemorial that one of the major roles of any government globally including Nigeria is the protection of lives and property of its citizens. This has become very paramount because any meaningful and sustained socio-economic advancement cannot take place in a country, where its populace is not secured. A secured human environment has the tendency to attract foreign investors and even enhance local entrepreneurs (Anikwudike & Agabi, 2025). This adduced for why different countries globally see the maintenance of peace and security within their borders as being paramount (Amana et al, 2020).

Essentially, socio-economic development entails a situation where there is an increase in improvement in the social and economic wellbeing of individual within a particular socio-economic environment. Through this, the populace has access to infrastructure, education, and healthcare, social and economic justice; with a general reduction in poverty. However, insecurity negatively impact on economic activities, limit access of populace to social services through displacement of the populace (Akinyemi & Ubah, 2022).

Apart from the Nigeria's Civil War (1967-1970) in the history of the country, where the entire nation was unprecedentedly engulfed by heightened insecurity. The nation's recent history is deeply threatened by violent and complicated insecurity, especially in the rural communities as a result of the incidence of farmers-herders clashes, Boko-Haram, kidnapping, animal rustling among others. The situation of insecurity has become worsened to the extent that there are over six (6) million arms that are illegally in circulation in the country (Small Arms Survey, 2023). Insecurity in the form of conflicts and violence in different parts of the country, especially in the Northern parts has made it impossible for students to have access to formal education facilities. According to UNICEF (2024) this has resulted to a situation where over 10.5 million children, especially in the rural North-East and North-West are completely out of school. There has been pressure on social services as a result of humanitarian crisis being created from the incidence of insecurity; to the extent that over 3 million populace has been displaced internally (UNHCR, 2024). Before now in Nigeria, including Edo State, there was no significant threat to lives and property of people in rural communities; hence there was relative peace in the rural communities, unlike in urban communities where there was much significant threat to lives and property.



However, in recent times in the country, the urban communities are relatively secured compared to that in the rural communities, where there are inordinate threat to lives and property; hence mitigating socio-economic development. According to Eizenstat, Porter and Weistein (2005) when there is a security gap in a country, none state armed group (NSAGs) such kidnappers, terrorists; cultists, bandits, armed robbers etc could easily take advantage of the gap. The NSAGs and other criminal group pose threat to the security of lives and property in different parts of Africa including Nigeria (Abdel-Latif & El-Gamal (2024). In the Northern and Middle-belt parts of Nigeria, their rural communities are dominated by the incidence of terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, farmer-herder conflicts, animal rustling and insurgency. However, the Southern parts of the country including Edo State, has been experiencing incidence of ritual killing, kidnapping, marauding cultists, oil theft etc. The state of insecurity has become heightened to the extent that the national budget to national security has been on the increase yearly (Agunbiade, 2024). The Edo State rural communities in recent history, has been experiencing violent crimes of kidnapping, marauding cultists among others.

The spate of insecurity in Edo State has degenerated in recent times to the extent that the state government established a security outfit known as the Edo State Security Corps to complement the conventional policing of the society by the Nigeria Police Force and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps. Different communities, especially the rural communities have organized their different private security outfits. Therefore, it has become sacrosanct to inculcate discussions on insecurity whenever an assessment is to be made about the state of the country (Adewunmi, 2014). It is against this backdrop that this study examined insecurity and socio-economic development in rural communities; Edo State in focus.

II. Statement of the Problem

Globally, including Nigeria, the issue of insecurity has negatively impacted the socio-economic lives of human endeavour. The state of insecurity in Nigeria including Edo State is becoming overwhelming, and has become a source of concern to both the governments and populace. According to Ariyo et al (2022), fear of movement has been the order of the day, where commuters, traders and farmers' attack has been on the increase, especially in the rural communities. The level of insecurity in Edo State especially in the rural communities has become heightened to the extent

that "night life" has become a thing of the past. Most obvious among security challenges in the country are the incidence of kidnapping, banditry, farmers-herders crisis among others (Adeniyi & Rosenji, 2024). Before now, the menaces of kidnapping, banditry and farmer-herder crisis were majorly common in the North-East Region of the country; where the counter-terrorism in the region has led to much death and property destroyed, especially at different local communities (Mamman, 2021).

In recent times, the Southern Region including Edo State, has witnessed a rise in security challenges, which has become a menace to livelihood, and directly threaten the overall socio-economic advancement of the populace (Ayodele & Ekundayo, 2025). Different incidence of kidnapping has been recorded in Semi-urban communities in some parts of Edo State. Importantly, Nigeria lost over \$1 b in the first quarter of 2022 as a result of a ripple effect of the different dimensions of insecurity (Ignatius, 2022). Apart from the Nigeria's Civil War (1967-1970) in the history of the country, where the entire nation was unprecedentedly engulfed by heightened insecurity; the nation's recent history is presently deeply threatened by violent and complicated insecurity, especially in the rural communities. Farmers-herders conflict in different parts of the country, especially in both Benue State and Plateau State has become a national embarrassment. The situation of insecurity has become worsened to the extent that there are over 6 million arms that are illegally in circulation in the country (Small Arms Survey, 2023).

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to examine insecurity and socio-economic development of rural communities in Nigeria; with focus in Edo State. The specific objectives of this study are to:

- (i) To ascertain and identify the impact of insecurity to the socio-economic development of rural communities in Edo State.
- (ii) To assess and determine the vulnerability of the rural communities in Edo State to insecurity.
- (iii) To provide recommendations against the backdrop of the findings of the study.

Research Questions

- (i) What are the impacts of insecurity to the socio-economic development of rural communities in Edo State?



- (ii) To what extent are the rural communities in Edo State vulnerable to insecurity?
- (iii) What measures can be implemented to enhance security in Edo State?

Interview Questions

1. How has cattle herders' invasion of farms affected the economic activities in your area?
2. Kidnapping has become a common occurrence in your area, how would you describe it and what is its effect in your community?
3. What do you think can be done to help reduce kidnapping and cattle herders' invasion of farms in your area?
4. How would you assess the administration of governor Obaseki and Okpekhoro's administrations in terms of security?

III. Conceptual Review

Insecurity in Nigeria

The literature on insecurity is numerous, but the following will suffice. For example, Onyepuemu (2015) unravels and looks into the threat of high level of insecurity as a result of violent crimes in Nigeria. According to Beland (2015) insecurity is a situation where there is fear and anxiety because there is no protection to lives and property. He went further that, the threat to lives and property brings about threat to production and social activities in Nigeria. Garga (2015) supported the submission of Beland (2015) when he opines that social and economic development of Nigeria has been limited by violent crimes by individual or groups against the country. Insecurity is basically a critical hiccup to the developmental efforts of the government to uplift the populace socio-economic existence because of threat to production activities (Abdullahi et al, 2022). In looking at the importance of security to the socio-and economic development of a country, the World Bank (2006) and United Nations Development Program (2015) in their various reports opine that, the strive by the Nigerian government to attain social economic advancement will only be a mirage in its usual spate of violent crimes. Socio-economic advancement is usually negatively affected by insecurity because production inputs are limited by it. Therefore, it is sacrosanct for crimes to be checkmated in any society (Adiele & Eneodu, 2022).

Development

Development is advancement, movement and progressiveness that is done toward the direction that is better than what it used to be (Okoli

& Onah, 2002). Such advancement according to them, encapsulate both material and non-material aspects in the socio-economic and political dimensions of the lives of human endeavours. All these usually lead to the advancement of the attitude of human towards uplifts in life. According to scholars, the concept of 'development' has no globally acceptable definition. It was in this wise that Rodney (1972) holistically see the word 'development' to have several interpretations in the same way most of the concepts in social sciences are. Amuwo (2015) opines that the word 'development' is a multi-dimensional act that involves structural changes in economic and attitudinal changes that tend to reduce inequality through the removal of absolute poverty in the society. Essentially, according to Okoye (2002) development is the uplift and movement in the general well-being of a people within a particular geographical environment.

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria and its escalation in Nigeria

There is no country in the world without any trace of insecurity, but its presence in Nigeria escalates on daily basis. Insecurity arises and escalates in Nigeria for several reasons. Insecurity in the country has become heightened as a result of increasing awareness of inequalities and disparity in social wellbeing due to heightened poverty, inequalities etc among Nigerians (Ewetan & Urhie, 2014). The security agencies are being faced with challenge of inadequate equipment and manpower (Ayegbo et al, 2022 & Odalon, 2022). There is the prevalent of elite policing; a situation where the elite, especially the political elites are well guarded to the detriment of the masses (Ogunbiade, 2024). Farmer-herder crisis is also another cause of heightened insecurity in Nigeria, including rural communities in Edo State. Farmer-herder conflicts used to be a local problem in the Middle-belt region of the country, but in recent times it has expanded to other parts, especially in rural communities. Different rural communities have been battling with different incidence of insecurity being caused by farmer-herder crisis (Otoghile et al, 2025).

The insecurity in the country has become escalated to the extent that Nigeria has always been low in the ranking of global peace by the Global Peace Index; an indicator that the peace and security in Nigeria has been deteriorated (Popoola & Shittu, 2020). This heightened insecurity has led to the enactment of Anti-Terrorism Act in 2011 (Agunbiade, 2024). He argues further that Nigeria borders are porous, and this has rekindled illegal



migration. This brought about illegal movement of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) in the country; thereby proliferating SALWs. Religious fanaticism and intolerance in some parts of Northern States brought about Islamic insurgents and Boko-Haram that has led to lose of lives and property since 2009 (Ewetan & Urhie, 2014). They submit further that ransom payment that are successfully paid to free kidnappers in the country complicate national insecurity. The level of insecurity in the country has grown to the extent that, the president of the United States of America declared it as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) by October, 2025.

Theoretical Review

The human security theory helps to explain the wide spread crimes and violence in the country as one of the consequences of weak governance, unemployment, corruption among others that undermine food security, health security, political security among others in the country. The human security theory came into force in 1982 as a matter of discussion by the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security. The framework of the theory became expanded by the Global Human Development Report (UNDP). The theory is concerned basically on marginalization and inequality that borders on justice, health, and education (Chikere, 2021). The basic tenets of the theory is that every human being has his basic needs in which he always seek to attain, and when they are not being able to be achieved as a result of the failure of someone else or group; conflict is bound to occur. The failure of the government in providing employment opportunities, and alleviating poverty among others propels insecurity in Nigeria.

According to the UNDP (1994) security is beyond the act of protecting a country territory from external aggression by its military; but it cut across upholding the dignity of human globally. This new dimension in human security is not to invest in arms but human development by engaging in policies that will engender peace and reduce poverty among others. Individual security by the military is no longer an issue, but concerned on the level of the problem of socio-economic and environment (Sen, 1999). Hence, the theory borders on communities and people, instead of being only concerned with security of state and ensure that there is environmental and economic safety. It does not focus on the traditional protection of the state, but it is concerned about the dignity and safety of people from threat such as hunger, repression, diseases among others. Importantly, the theory will facilitate

participatory policy-making by the government to stem the tide of insecurity in Edo State. When the state is secured according to the human security theory, it will help to ensure that every human has his basic needs which he seeks to attain. It will further encourage the Nigerian government not to only concentrate on the protection of its nation territorial integrity

Empirical Review

Several empirical studies emphasized the effect of insecurity on the socio-economic development of Nigeria; though some were particular in the effect of insecurity on some economic parameters such as business and agriculture. For example, Adebisi et al, (2017) investigated the effect of insurgency being carried out by Boko-Haram on the agricultural sector in the rural communities. In this study, the research method being made use of was the time series data analysis. And the descriptive statistics and t-test were used to analyse the secondary data before the insurgency and during it. This was done by the study in order to examine them closely and understand their relationship. The findings of the study reveal that there was a high contribution of the agricultural sector to the GDP before the incidence of Boko-Haram, compared to the period when the Boko-Haram incidence was in existence; where the agricultural sector contribution to the GDP became very low. From the findings of the study, it was recommended that the government via its policy making to embark on legal measure to address the incidence of insecurity and make better incentives available for farmers, and motivate them more into farming activities.

Ineji and Agri (2020) embarked on an empirical examination on the actual causes of insecurity and its socio-economic effect in Nigeria, which they titled "Insecurity, Conflict and Socio-economic Development in Nigeria". In the study, they deployed the use of survey method that entails the use of structured questionnaire, focus group discussions and the interviews method. From their findings, it revealed that the country has experienced inordinate levels of insecurity as a result of the incidence of insurgency, terrorism, kidnapping, cultism, ritual killings, bad governance, poverty, injustice and corruption. From their findings, they recommended the government to make policies and programmes that will induce participatory and inclusive growth and development for the poor. Such policies and programmes will help to bring together the communities and the deprived populace into the gamut of socio-economic



development. Using ex-post facto research design and descriptive statistics; where Correlation and Multiple Regression of Ordinary Least Square technique were used to test the hypotheses; Danjuma, Dare and Kojo (2023) investigated the effect of insecurity on the performance of small businesses in Nigeria. It was concluded by the study that insecurity has significant negative effect on the performance of small businesses in Nigeria. It was recommended by the study that the government should give legislative backing to the establishment of local security structures at state and local government levels, in order to adequately protect business environment; and provide modern equipment and improve welfare of security personnel to motivate their fight against insecurity in the country.

IV. METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

The mixed method of social research encapsulates both the positivist and interpretative method; that is, a mixture of both questionnaire and research interview or interview questions. The essential of the mixed method is that it helps to attain both depth and width of a research so as to be able to answer the research question designed. Moreover it helps to develop a comprehensive understanding of a research problem in the convergence of information from different sources (Creswell, 2009). This research design for this study adopted two rural communities each from two local governments each, from the three senatorial district of Edo State (Edo North, Edo Central, and Edo South).

V. Data Analysis

Edo State

A total of 300 questionnaires were administered while 280 were retrieved; and this formed the basis of our analysis.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	150	53.6
	Female	130	46.4
	Total	280	100.0
Age	18-25	80	28.6
	26-35	60	21.4
	36-45	35	12.5
	46-55	55	19.6
	56-65	30	10.7
	66 and above	20	7.2
	Total	280	100.0
Educational qualification	Primary school	20	7.2



	SSCE	80	28.6
	OND/NCE	60	21.4
	HND/B.Sc.	90	32.1
	M.Sc.	20	7.2
	PhD	10	3.5
	Total	280	100.0

The above statistics shows that 53.6 percent of respondents are male and 46.4 percent are female. The statistics above shows that 28.6 percent of respondents are between ages 18-25yrs, 21.4 percent are between 26-35yrs, 12.5 percent are between 36-45yrs, 19.6 percent are between 46-55yrs, 10.7 percent are between 56-65yrs and 7.2 percent are above 66 years of age.

The above statistics shows that 7.2 percent of respondents are primary school leavers, 28.6 percent are school certificate holders, 21.4 percent are National Diploma holders and NCE holders, 32.1 percent are HND/B.Sc holders, 7.2 percent are Masters degree holders and 3.5 percent are PhD degree holders.

Table 2: Impact of insecurity on socio-economic development of rural communities in Edo State

Question	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Herdsmen and their herds activities in the farmlands has led to food insecurity		
Agreed	95	33.9
Strongly agreed	85	30.4
Disagreed	60	21.4
Strongly disagreed	40	14.3
Herdsmen activities has led to loss of lives and properties		
Agreed	105	37.5
Strongly agreed	95	33.9
Disagreed	40	14.3
Strongly disagreed	40	14.3

The statistics above shows that 33.9 percent of respondents agreed that herdsmen activities has led to food insecurity, 30.4 percent strongly agreed, 21.4 percent disagreed and 14.3 percent strongly disagreed. The statistics above shows that 37.5 percent of respondents agreed that herdsmen activities has led to the loss of lives and properties, 33.9 percent strongly agreed, 14.3 percent disagreed and 14.3 percent strongly disagreed.

Table 3: Possible Remedies to the Problem of Insecurity in Edo State

Question	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Cattle ranches can help to solve herdsmen and farmer clashes		
Agreed	65	32.2
Strongly agreed	80	28.6
Disagreed	95	33.9
Strongly disagreed	40	14.3
Insurgency and terrorism are caused by poverty and bad governance		
Agreed	150	53.6
Strongly agreed	78	27.9
Disagreed	22	7.8
Strongly disagreed	30	10.7
Good governance can help to reduce terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria		
Agreed	172	61.4



Strongly agreed	73	26.1
Disagreed	15	5.4
Strongly disagreed	20	7.1
Equipping the military and other security agencies will help to reduce or curb insurgency and terrorism		
Agreed	120	42.9
Strongly agreed	60	21.4
Disagreed	45	16.1
Strongly disagreed	55	19.6

The above statistics shows that 23.2 percent of respondents agreed that cattle ranches can help to solve herdsman and farmers clashes, 28.6 percent strongly agreed, 33.9 percent disagreed and 14.3 percent strongly disagreed.

The above statistics shows that 53.6 percent of respondents agreed that insurgency and terrorism are caused by poverty and bad governance, 27.9 percent strongly agreed, 78 percent disagreed and 10.7 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed.

The above statistics shows that 61.4 percent of respondents agreed that good governance can help to reduce terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria, 26.1 percent strongly agreed, 5.4 percent disagreed and 7.1 percent strongly disagreed.

The statistics above shows that 42.9 percent of respondents agreed that equipping the military and other security agencies will help to reduce or curb insurgency and terrorism, 21.4 percent strongly agreed, 16.1 percent disagreed and 19.6 percent strongly disagreed.

In 2018, herdsman attacked villages in Akoko-Edo, including Egbigere, Ikpeshi and Enwan; set farms ablaze and kidnapped some citizens who are the same church members were kidnapped near Jattu Grammar School (behind the Power-line) and one couple was also kidnapped while coming from the farm. Some gun men who were suspected to be kidnapers attacked the Catholic Immaculate Conception Minor Seminary School at Ivianokpodi and Agenebode in Estako East Local Government Area. At the incidence, an official of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) was killed.

Edo State Security Corps popularly known as vigilantes in collaboration with local hunters successfully rescued nine kidnapped victims in a bush combing operation in Jattu, Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State. In Edo State, the road linking the state and Ondo State has several communities such as Iyowa, Odighi etc.; where rural dwellers have been driven out of their farms by

Fulani herdsman and they took over their farms. During the Covid-19 years of 2020-21 the people suffered hunger and poverty from two angles: the Covid-19 pandemic and the activities of herdsman. Many of the rural dwellers ran for their lives and came to the urban centre for fear of their lives. Only recently has the activities of herders reduced, but the major issue now is the incessant kidnapping that has pervaded almost every rural community in Edo State.

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

The insecurity situation in Edo State has increased drastically; from the Edo North to Edo Central; and from Edo Central to Edo South; the situation is the same. The activities of herdsman became a problem to the farmer in the state from 2018-2022. The recent upsurge in insecurity is the activities of kidnapers. The effect of herdsman rendered many farmers helpless and their source of livelihood was taken from them. All these have led to a sporadic increase in the prices of food. Presently, the major security challenge confronting the state is kidnapping for ransom; and where victims are not able to pay the ransom, they are killed. To improve the security situation in the state, the security apparatus left behind by the previous administration that seemed to be working, should be improved upon and not totally dismantled. The local vigilante and the police should work in synergy as well as the military where necessary helicopters and modern technology can be deployed to curb the kidnapping situation in the state.

Moreover, the institutions in the state should be made to function effectively by creating good governance that will create jobs for the people. The farmers should be encouraged by providing the needed security in the various communities, so that they can go about their farming and business activities without fear or intimidation.

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