



## INSECURITY AND THE PAUPERIZATION OF RESIDENTS OF OWERRI IN IMO STATE, NIGERIA: AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT

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### **Abstract:**

Poverty and insecurity are twin recurrent issues in recent times for many countries in the world, especially Third World countries in Africa to which Nigeria belongs. Security is a pillar without which no meaningful development can be achieved and sustained. Nigeria, like most other Sub-Sahara Africa countries, is deeply embroiled in and facing multifaceted security challenges. The wave of insecurity in Nigeria has assumed a dangerous dimension that is threatening both the safety of environment for lives and properties and the conduct of business and economic activities thereby causing untold hardship and poverty. The poverty level in Nigeria is such that many people now live below the poverty line and has become a source of concern and subject of growing attention for both academics and policy makers. This paper, therefore, sought to find out if insecurity has a causative effect on the pauperization of the people of Owerri and vice versa with particular reference to recent happenings in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. The survey research design, questionnaire and interviews as instruments of primary data collection and relative deprivation theory as framework were used for the study. Data were analysed with simple percentages while the chi-square was used to test the hypothesis. Secondary data from library research was utilized for analytical discussion. Research findings show that insecurity has both a cause and an effect relationship with poverty cum pauperization and the need to shun violence is recommended.

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## 1. Introduction

Despite her vast resources and being one of the largest producers of crude oil in Africa and the sixth oil producer in the world, Nigeria is still ranked among the poorest countries in the world. World Bank (2021) reports that about 4 in every 10 Nigerians are living in poverty with millions more susceptible to falling below the poverty line. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2019) in its official survey data stated that whereas 39.1 per cent of Nigerians live below the international poverty line of \$1.90 per person per day (2011 PPP) in 2018/19, a further 31.9 per cent of Nigerians had consumption levels between \$1.90 and \$3.20 per person per day, making them vulnerable to falling into extreme poverty when shocks occur. Shock in this case could take the form of insecurity which is the antithesis of security. To Osunyikanmi (2014), insecurity is a condition of exposure to danger, indeed a pervasive unsafe condition of existence.

The insecurity situation in Nigeria presently is unprecedented leading to scores of deaths of not only innocent civilians but including foreigners, security personnel, elected officials as well as government workers. Businesses are equally adversely affected by the heightened insecurity as a good number of them stay closed most of the time or offer skeletal services. Consumer and investor confidence have equally fallen resulting in a decrease in business expansion which would normally have bolstered economic growth. The daunting proportion of the insecurity challenge has caused the country's political and economic managers and, indeed the entire nation, to bemoan both the loss of their loved ones and investments as well as the absence of safety in most parts of the country (Onifade, Imhonopi & Urim, 2013). This insecurity may not be unconnected to the increasing ethnic hate, religious bigotry, political rivalry and a growing population of disgruntled citizens in the country who feel that they have been short-changed and given very limited or no access to the common patrimony (Onifade, Imhonopi & Urim, 2013). The continued state of insecurity has not only become a menace to the very foundations of national integration in the country, but it has also equally meted a deadly blow to the socio-economic welfare of the people resulting in the pattern of fear, disquiet and anxiety.

Igbuzor (2011) avers that the state of insecurity in Nigeria is as a result of the government's failure as manifested in her incapacity to deliver public goods to the citizens. This lack of basic necessities by the Nigerian people (poverty) has resulted in the emanation of fear of uncertainty, discontentment, frustration and hopelessness thus creating a growing army of frustrated people who are ready to take laws into their hands and resort to violence at the slightest provocation or opportunity (insecurity). Seemingly in agreement, Achumba, Ighomereho & Akpor-Robaro (2013), highlighted unemployment and poverty, terrorism, porous borders etc. as some proximate factors that have contributed to the state of insecurity in Nigeria. This implies that the preponderance of poverty is a serious threat to national security, especially to the extent that it propagates and abets crime, rebellion and dissidence. Thus, poverty can be said to

be both a cause and an effect of insecurity. Consequently, this study investigates the extent to which the insecurity situation has affected the general socio-economic living standards of the people/residents of Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria.

## 2. Statement of Problem

Security is a basic responsibility of the state (Hobbes & Tuck 1996) as exemplified by the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which specifically states that the security and welfare of the people shall be the basic function of government. However, Ewetan and Ese (2014) opine that the Nigerian government has unfortunately failed in this constitutional responsibility by not providing a secured and safe enabling environment for lives, properties and striving of business and economic activities. This rising wave of insecurity in Nigeria has assumed an unprecedented dangerous dimension which is threatening the corporate existence of the country as one geographical entity. The high level of insecurity in Nigeria is confirmed by her high ranking (third place) in the Global Terrorism Index (GTI, 2020) as seen in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Global Terrorism Index

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	RANK CHANGE	RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	RANK CHANGE	RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	RANK CHANGE
1	Afghanistan	9.592	↔	28	Ethiopia	5.307	↔	56	Canada	3.171	↓ 3
2	Iraq	8.682	↔	29	United States of America	5.260	↑ 2	57	Jordan	3.149	↑ 5
3	Nigeria	8.314	↔	30	United Kingdom	5.161	↓ 4	58	Tanzania	3.112	↑ 2
4	Syria	7.778	↔	31	Palestine	5.077	↑ 1	=59	Belgium	3.043	↓ 6
5	Somalia	7.645	↑ 1	32	Saudi Arabia	5.000	↓ 3	=59	Italy	3.043	↑ 3
6	Yemen	7.581	↑ 1	33	Bangladesh	4.909	↓ 3	61	Sweden	2.892	↓ 5
7	Pakistan	7.541	↓ 2	34	Chad	4.829	↑ 4	62	Ireland	2.845	↑ 7
8	India	7.353	↔	35	Burundi	4.702	↓ 2	63	Spain	2.810	↓ 4
9	Democratic Republic of the Congo	7.178	↑ 1	36	Ukraine	4.692	↓ 11	64	Bolivia	2.795	↓ 6
10	Philippines	7.099	↓ 1	37	Indonesia	4.629	↓ 2	65	Algeria	2.696	↓ 8
11	Mali	7.049	↑ 2	38	France	4.614	↓ 2	66	Netherlands	2.689	↑ 11
12	Burkina Faso	6.755	↑ 15	39	Russia	4.542	↓ 2	67	Ecuador	2.606	↑ 6
13	Cameroon	6.627	↑ 1	40	Israel	4.522	↔	=68	Brazil	2.443	↑ 6
14	Egypt	6.419	↓ 3	41	South Africa	4.358	↔	=68	Zimbabwe	2.443	↓ 1
15	Mozambique	6.400	↑ 8	42	New Zealand	4.337	↑ 79	70	Paraguay	2.414	↓ 6
16	Libya	6.250	↓ 4	43	Mexico	4.316	↑ 5	71	Bahrain	2.402	↓ 10
17	Central African Republic	6.241	↓ 2	44	Greece	4.182	↑ 2	=72	Haiti	2.355	↑ 6
18	Turkey	6.110	↓ 2	45	Tajikistan	4.180	↑ 6	=72	Nicaragua	2.355	↓ 8
19	Colombia	6.100	↔	46	Iran	4.157	↓ 7	74	Australia	2.148	↓ 2
20	Sri Lanka	6.065	↑ 35	47	Chile	4.031	↓ 2	75	Peru	2.141	↓ 8
21	Thailand	5.783	↓ 3	48	Germany	3.965	↓ 4	76	Malaysia	2.090	↓ 5
22	South Sudan	5.726	↓ 5	49	Tunisia	3.858	↑ 1	77	Republic of the Congo	2.043	↓ 7
23	Kenya	5.644	↓ 2	50	Rwanda	3.754	↑ 16	78	Honduras	2.023	↑ 20
24	Niger	5.617	↓ 2	51	Lebanon	3.661	↓ 8	79	Japan	2.014	↓ 1
25	Myanmar	5.543	↓ 1	52	Venezuela	3.658	↓ 5	80	Cote d'Ivoire	1.945	↓ 6
26	Sudan	5.401	↓ 6	53	China	3.587	↓ 11	81	Kuwait	1.795	↓ 5
27	Nepal	5.340	↑ 7	54	Angola	3.429	↓ 2	82	Ghana	1.743	↑ 4
				55	Uganda	3.278	↓ 6	83	Finland	1.721	↓ 3

Source: 2020 Global Terrorism Index

This disturbing level of insecurity in Nigeria has increased the crime rate and terrorists'/bandits' attacks in different parts of the country, leaving unpalatable challenges for the nation's economy and its growth. According to Ewetan (2013), the numerous resultant daunting challenges confronting Nigeria include a high rate of unemployment, debilitating youth unemployment, low industrial output, unstable and deteriorating exchange rate. Others include a high inflation rate, inadequate physical and

social infrastructure, very large domestic debt, rising stock of external debt and most importantly endemic rural and urban poverty which pose a serious threat to the socio-economic and political development of Nigeria. Furthermore, resentment of and disaffection with the government's inability to provide a secure and safe environment has equally resulted in ethnic and religious violence as well as communal clashes and violence in different parts of the country resulting in the destruction of lives and properties as well as disrupted businesses and economic activities. In another vein, the perceived neglect and seeming marginalization of the government by some groups have also not only resulted in ethnic agitations for secession but have influenced the emergency of ethnic militia groups fighting for the cause of their people and consequently heightening the insecurity situation.

Amnesty International 2021 reports that the Eastern Security Network (ESN), the armed wing of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a pro-Biafra group movement, which has been proscribed by the Nigerian government allegedly killed dozens of security operatives and attacked at least ten public buildings, including prisons and police stations, from January to June in Imo, Anambra and Abia states in Southeast Nigeria. In the same vein, Ukpong (2021) reports that the setting ablaze of part of the building of Imo State Governor Hope Uzodinma's country home in April by gunmen and killing of Ahmed Gulak, a chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and a former political adviser to President Goodluck Jonathan, in Owerri show the level of insecurity in the state. The Amnesty International 2021 equally reported that in reprisal attacks, security forces comprising military, police and Department of State Services (DSS) have killed dozens of gunmen as well as civilians in areas where these attacks have been committed.

In another report, Nkwopara (2021) posits that due to damnable activities of official and unofficial armed men, the South Eastern states, particularly Owerri in Imo State, have been passing through perilous times and a very careful peep into the economic and social life of the people will show that it has been lying flat on its belly bleeding since the unknown gunmen descended on it with their large dose of mayhem. Most private business establishments in Owerri and the adjoining communities, for instance, are no longer open for business before 9am. Between the hours of 4.30pm and 5pm, most shop owners close their shops for the day and leave for their homes as a result of fear of either armed robbers or unknown gunmen, the bandits, kidnappers and/or herdsmen - a situation that can adequately be referred to as a self-imposed curfew. Owerri city which prides itself as the hospitality capital has literally become a ghost of its former self.

Bearing the problems in mind, this research investigated the extent to which the insecurity situation in Owerri in Imo State has resulted not only in the stoppage/reduction of market activities, businesses and other economic engagements in the state but also in the loss of human lives and property resulting in the pauperization of the inhabitants of the city. The research equally seeks to proffer recommendations on ways to curtail the pervading incessant insecurity being witnessed in the state which has

adversely affected the socio-economic living standard of the people of Owerri in particular and Nigeria in general.

## 2.1 Research Questions

The pertinent question this research seeks to answer is what are the nature, causes and consequences of the emergent insecurity in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria and the implications on the standard of living of the residents of the area? Other questions include

- What is the impact of insecurity on the economic activities in Owerri, Imo State?
- How does insecurity impact on incomes of the residents of Owerri, Imo State?
- To what extent does the insecurity lead to the impoverishment of the residents of Owerri, Imo State?
- What can be done to improve both security and the living standard of residents of Owerri, Imo State?

## 2.2 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to investigate the nature, causes and consequences of the emergent insecurity in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria and the implications on the standard of living of the residents of the area. Other objectives include to:

- Assess the impact of insecurity on economic activities in Owerri Imo State.
- Examine the implications of insecurity on the income of the residents of Owerri, Imo State.
- Examine the extent to which insecurity has led to the impoverishment of the residents of Owerri, Imo State.
- Proffer solutions on what can be done to improve on insecurity as well as the living standard of the residents of Owerri, Imo State.

## 2.3 Hypothesis

The following hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 1:** Insecurity significantly causes pauperization of the residents of Owerri Imo State.

## 3. Conceptual Clarification

### 3.1 Pauperization and Poverty

To Ogunkoya (2009), pauperism is the policy or an alignment aimed at keeping the poor indefinitely in a degrading position in order to create and maintain a hiatus between the poor and the rich. This is accomplished by making such pauperized areas both economically stagnant and politically unstable as well as creating an atmosphere that disallows meaningful development. Pauperism denies rights to some individuals thus making pauperized members of the society be hopelessly devalued. Samir (2003) opines that pauperization is a modernization of poverty that has immense devastating effects in

all dimensions of social life. Thus, a pauper could be said to be a person in a chronic state of poverty.

To Vambe (2016), poverty has no universally accepted definition rather it is relative, meaning different things to different people in different circumstances. Jimada (2008) defines poverty as an economic condition where people lack sufficient income to obtain certain minimal levels of education, health services, housing, food and clothing generally recognized as necessary for an acceptable standard of living. In other words, poverty is a situation of penury, suffering and dearth of basic needs of life (Okpe & Abu, 2006). Hans-Peter (1994) sees poverty as the inability of any person to satisfy his or her basic needs due to lack of income or property and or means of change hence, any working individual who has nothing to show for it is said to be poor. Poverty is not only dehumanizing, but it is also debasing because, by its very nature, it is a condition that deprives individuals of the right to exercise potential.

### 3.1.2 Measures of Poverty

Fry (2020) posits that poverty can be measured in two ways - absolute poverty or relative poverty. Absolute poverty is a condition where a person is unable to provide for basic needs. It has specific fiscal outlines and measures poverty only in relation to the amount of money necessary to meet basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, safe drinking water, education, healthcare etc. Absolute poverty does not include broader quality of life issues or the overall level of inequality in society and it fails to recognize that individuals also have important social and cultural needs.

Relative poverty is established in relation to the economic climate in which one resides and connotes the condition where people are deprived of the minimum amount of income required to preserve the average standard of living in the society they live in. Although these people might have a certain amount of money, it is still not enough to provide for the basics as well as achieve the average standard of living compared to others in their community. According to Kai (2021), a common relative poverty example is to think of a person who is able to provide for the basic needs such as food and shelter but unable to obtain other standard things the people around them have that make life easier and more enjoyable such as personal transportation like a car or bicycle. The measures of poverty are summarized in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2: Absolute and Relative Poverty**

Absolute Poverty	Relative Poverty
Inability to provide for basic needs	Can provide for basic needs, but only barely
Primarily focused on biological needs	Also accounts for social and cultural needs
Unable to benefit from the economic growth of the country	Benefit from economic growth, but at a much lower rate than those not experiencing poverty

**Source:** Adopted from Kai (2021)

Poverty is multi-dimensional and as such no single indices can be used to capture all the aspects of poverty. Onyeiwu (2021) listed the multidimensional poverty measuring indices to include income, security, peoples' access to health, education, living standard indicators such as sanitation, electricity, clean drinking water and housing. According to Lain and Vlishwanath (2021), Nigeria is home to the largest number of poor people in Sub-Saharan Africa (which doubles as the world's poorest region) and the World Bank's Multidimensional Poverty Measure (MPM) that captures dimensions of education and basic infrastructure alongside monetary poverty shows that about 47.3% of Nigerians - nearly 98 million people - live in multidimensional poverty. Amao, Ayantoye and Fanifosi (2017) and Onoja, Onodorogu, Chagwiza and Taqwi (2022) are in agreement that the Imo state is in a state of poverty. This is further confirmed by the 28.86% headcount poverty rate as shown in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3: Poverty Headcount Rate by States**

**POVERTY AND INEQUALITY IN NIGERIA - 2019**  
**POVERTY HEADCOUNT RATE AND POVERTY GAP INDICES**

STATE	POVERTY HEADCOUNT RATE	POVERTY GAP INDEX	SQUARED POVERTY GAP INDEX (SEVERITY)
Borno	-----	-----	-----
Cross River	36.29	9.66	3.60
Delta	6.02	0.94	0.21
Ebonyi	79.76	34.09	17.05
Edo	11.99	2.90	1.01
Ekiti	28.04	6.16	2.00
Enugu	58.13	16.00	6.34
Gombe	62.31	20.03	8.97
Imo	28.86	6.89	2.35

**Source:** Adapted from National Bureau of Statistics (2019) to indicate select few for the purpose of this research paper.

### **3.1.3 Causes of Poverty**

Ogunkoya (2009) categorized the causes of poverty into two main groups namely: the natural causes and the artificial causes of poverty. To Ogunkoya (2009), the natural causes of poverty include such phenomena as drought or famine, changes in climatic condition, natural disasters, lack of natural resources, invasion by pests etc. whereas the artificial causes of poverty are man-made and include corruption, greed, deliberate attempt of the government policy actions structured to impoverish the citizens or a section of the country, domination and ill-treatment of the weak by the strong, the apathetic attitude of the government towards its various policies aimed at alleviating the sufferings of the poor masses, abandonment of the well-being of the citizens by government, mal-administration by the few ruling class who may wish to consider ruler-ship as their birth right, all forms of exploitation, oppression of the masses by the ruling class, the failure of the government to create employment opportunities, good and affordable system of education, destruction of natural resources by the ruling class which reduces agricultural activities without adequate compensations, insecurity etc.

### **3.2 Security and Insecurity**

Omede (2012) asserts that security is a vital situation involving the comparative ability of a state to counter threats to its fundamental values and interests. McGrew (1988) posits that the security of a nation depends on two important pillars which are (1) the protection and maintenance of the socio-economic order in the event of internal and external threat and (2) the promotion of a preferred international order, which reduces the threat to basic values and interests, as well as to the domestic order. To Nwolise (2006), security is a comprehensive condition that recommends: the safety of a territory by a network of armed forces; the sovereignty of the state which must be assured by a democratic and nationalistic government and protected by the military, police and the people themselves; safety of the people from not only external attacks but also from catastrophic consequences of domestic disruptions such as hunger, unemployment, starvation, homelessness, ignorance, diseases, environmental degradation, pollution and other socio-economic injustices. In another vein, Nwagboso (2012) defines insecurity as the danger that entrepreneurs and executives of business organizations exercise by removing their business ventures from insecure areas to more secure ones. Security is simply the presence of conditions that enables individuals in a society to go about their normal daily activities without any form of threat to lives and property (Akin, 2008).

Insecurity is therefore the extreme opposite of security (Vambe, 2016) and has such characteristic features as lack of safety, danger, hazard, uncertainty, want of confidence, state of doubt, instability, trouble etc. (Achumba, Ighomereho & Akpor-Robaro, 2013). Achumba et al. argue further that these characteristic features point to a situation of susceptibility to harm, loss of life, property or livelihood. Therefore, they equate insecurity to a state of lack of knowledge and control as well as the inability to take defensive action against forces that are harmful or dangerous to an individual or group, thus making them vulnerable. For Beland (2005), insecurity is the state of fear or anxiety



as a result of an evident or alleged lack of protection. Nwagboso (2012) identifies insecurity as a form of danger that forces entrepreneurs and executives of business organizations to relocate their business ventures from an insecure environment to a more secure one exemplified by the relocation of the Igbo and Yoruba businessmen to their native lands in the wake of Boko Haram Insurgency (Adegbami, 2013). Omonijo, Obiorah, Onyekere, Anyaegbunam, Shaibu and Ogunwa (2017) aver that presently, the issue of insecurity seems to be heightened more within countries than between one country and another most especially in developing countries. This they argued is to be attributable to the assimilation of western culture with traditional ways of life which have resulted in developing societies changing their mode of security from informal system to formal. Furthermore, the insecurity now exacerbated has become endemic as a result of poor management by the leaders of the least developed countries like Nigeria.

### 3.2.1 Sources of Insecurity

Omonijo et al (2017) cite violent conflicts and non-violent conflicts as the two sources of conflict that make a nation insecure.

a). According to Omonijo et al (2017), *violent conflict* involves all variants of homicide, law-breaking, extermination, assassinations, massacre, confrontation and terrorism and summarized by Ikeke (2014) as an unswerving attack on people's physical or psychological truthfulness or psychological integrity. Violent conflicts emerge from all types of coercive or brutal action concerning bodily or emotional misery when one or two persons, groups, parties, communities are involved in a discrepancy that leads to dispute and struggle over resources. In such situations, people engage dangerous material weapons (such as arms and ammunitions) and non-material weapons (words of mouth or other fetish means) to harm their opponents in order to emerge victorious (Omonijo et al., 2017).

b). *Non-violent Conflicts* These include food, economy, health, personal, community, political and environmental insecurity based on the Haq's seven categories of threat to humanity (UNDP, 1994; Omonijo et al., 2017). Non-violent conflicts have been associated with developing countries alone and are manifested in the failure of the leadership to adequately provide basic essential services required for a successful life such as adequate health facilities, building good road networks, provision of running tap water, befitting shelter or accommodation, nourishing food, steady electricity, good employment with sound conditions of service, good education etc. for the people (Ogbeidi, 2012). The prevalence of non-conflict violence has negative implications on both peoples' wellness in terms of life expectancy and human development index as well as having an adverse effect on their productivity, effectiveness and efficiency in other institutions that make the whole.

Whereas the nature of insecurity in developed nations is shown to be synonymous with violent conflicts mostly centred on natural and climatic changes such as earthquakes, tropical storms (Ahme Ladan-Baki, 2014), Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and other organized crimes-violent conflicts (Elliot, 2015) that of

developing countries and sub-Saharan Africa of which Nigeria is a part of has been reported to be rooted in both violent and non-violent conflicts (Omonijo et al., 2017).

### **3.2.2 Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria**

Achumba et al (2013) posit that insecurity entails peril; death trap; ambiguity; the dearth of fortification, and lack of security while enumerating some of the causes of insecurity in Nigeria to include

a) The absence of institutional capacity which has resulted in government failure. Fukuyama (2004) refers to this as the breakdown of institutional infrastructures causing deterioration of governance and democratic accountability. In the same vein, Igbuzor (2011) avers that the state of insecurity in Nigeria is a function of government failure manifested in her incapacity to deliver public goods to the citizens. This dearth of basic necessities has created a growing army of frustrated Nigerian people who will resort to violence at the slightest goading or opportunity.

b) The perception of marginalization by many Nigerians. This is evident from the extravagance displayed by the political class and elite in the midst of suffering and grinding poverty to which citizens are subjected. Even security has been "bourgeoisified" by the elite as affirmed by Egwu (2001) view that the security of the Nigerian nation-state has been truncated to the extent that it is now for the ruler and his immediate supporters. This condition of injustice, unfairness and inequality has hardened the masses, resulting in their decisions to take their destiny into their hands.

c) Disconnect between the people and government over the years: There has been a growing detachment of the people from the government resulting in misunderstanding, mistrust and resentment. None of the governments, both military and civilian, have made a substantive effort to bridge this abyss leading to the peoples' perception that government does not care about their welfare. Consequently, the people become easy prey to centrifugal forces who co-opt/incite them to vent their anger on the perceived enemies of the people leading sometimes to upheavals and destructions.

d) Immediate and proximate factors: According to Achumba et al. (2013), the proximate factors that have contributed to the state of insecurity in Nigeria include rural-urban drift, porous borders, social irresponsibility of companies resulting in negative externalities which provoke social unrest within their host communities, unemployment and poverty and terrorism, among others. Vambe (2016) asserts that in addition to such security challenges as violent crimes, ethno-religious conflicts, resource-based conflicts, trans-border criminal activities and election-induced violence, there is no doubt that pervasive poverty amongst the people is an important factor for consideration while attempting to explain the problem. Thus, poverty can be said to be both a cause and a result of insecurity.

### **3.3 Theoretical Framework**

Numerous theoretical perceptions can be considered adequate as a framework for this discourse ranging from the classical functionalist theory and Marxian theory to

contemporary sociological theories (elite, social structure and anomie as well as relative deprivation theory). The relative deprivation theory is adopted as this work's theoretical framework.

Relative deprivation theory is a middle-range contemporary social sciences theory that not only dates back to ancient Greece and is largely associated with Gurr (1970). It is indistinguishably linked to poverty and social segregation (Omonijo et al., 2017). Gurr (1970) posits that not only is revolution fuelled by a relative sense or feeling of inequality. An infringement between projected and accomplished wellbeing leads to cooperative dissatisfaction. Thus, frustration inspired by anger referred to as the frustration-aggression mechanism could be attributed as the main root of the human capacity for violence. Relative deprivation as a term denotes the strain or tension that emerges from a disagreement between the "ought" and the "is" of collective value satisfaction which prompts humanity to violence. Explaining further, Obah-Akpowoghaha (2013) illustrates the prerequisite of relative deprivation thus: where individual A feels deprived of object X; individual A does not have X; individual A wants to have X; individual A knows of other persons who have X; individual A believes obtaining X is realistic. This theory is considered apt to explicate the discourse in this investigation as most violence-causing-related poverty incidents in Nigeria are traced to aggression and deprivation.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Method of Research

The methodology adopted in this investigation is the survey research design.

### 4.2. Area of Study

The area of study is Owerri comprising Owerri Municipal, Owerri West and Owerri North Local Government Areas of Imo State, Nigeria. Imo State is located in the Southeast Zone of Nigeria.

### 4.3. Population

The population of the study is gotten from the three Local Government Areas: Owerri Municipal (172,600), Owerri West (242,800) and Owerri North (140,100) as shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1:** Population of the Three (3) Local Government Areas of Study

S/NO	Name Of Local Government Area	Population Census, 2006	Population Projection, 2016
1	Owerri Municipal	125,337	172,600
2	Owerri North	176,334	242,800
3	Owerri West	101,754	140,100
	<b>Total</b>		<b>555,500</b>

Source: City Population (2020).

From Table 1 above the total population is 555,500.

### 3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size for this study is derived from Yamane's (1967) statistical formula for the determination of sample size using the total population of 555,500 from the area of study. The statistical formula is;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n is the sample size,

N is the population size in this case 555,500

e is the margin of error 0.05. When this formula is applied to the above population we have

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{555500}{1 + 555500(0.05)^2} \\ &= \frac{555500}{1 + 555500(0.0025)} \\ &= \frac{555500}{1389.75} \\ n &= 399.71 \\ n &= 400 \text{ approximately} \end{aligned}$$

Stratified, quota and random sampling methods are adopted to ensure that respondents were gotten from the three local governments in the study area and that the number of respondents administered questionnaires in the different local governments is representative of their percentage in the entire population.

**Table 2:** Stratified / Quota Sampling Size for the Three (3) Local Government Areas of Study

S/NO	Name of Local Government Area	Stratified Sample (%)	Quota Sample Size
1	Owerri Municipal	31	124
2	Owerri North	44	176
3	Owerri West	25	100
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>400</b>

Table 2 above shows the sample size for the three local governments in the area of study.

Questionnaire and interview were the instruments of primary data collection. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, section A and section B. Section A contained the socio-demographic variables of the respondents while Section B comprised of questions relating to the security challenges and the implications on the standard of living of the residents of Owerri Municipal, Imo State. Close-ended questions were used to ensure reliability and avoidance of irregularity in answers. The questionnaire was self-administered by the researchers to reduce the incidence of un-returned questionnaires. An additional 60 persons - 20 for each local government - were randomly selected and interviewed.

### 3.4 Method of Data Analysis

The percentage distribution was utilized to determine the proportion of respondents that chose the various responses. The chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistics was used to test the hypothesis of the study. It is given by the formula:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$$

Where:

$\chi^2$  = Chi-squared

$\sum$  = Sum Of

E = Expected frequency

O = Observed frequency (Kelley and Donnelly, 2009). In testing the significance of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ), due consideration was given to the degree of freedom and the level of significance. The degree of freedom (df) is calculated using the formula:

$$df = (r - 1) (c - 1) \text{ (Kelley and Donnelly, 2009)}$$

Where:

df = degree of freedom

r = number of rows

c = number of columns

Interview responses were analyzed thematically.

## 5. Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

381 copies of the questionnaire were returned representing 95% of the distributed copies of the questionnaire. This signifies a high return rate and the analysis of data collected was made based on this figure of the returned questionnaire.

### 5.1 Data Presentation

**Table 3:** Background Characteristics of Respondents

Category	Option	Frequency	Percent (%)
Sex	Male	199	52.2
	Female	179	47.0
	Total	378	99.2
	Missing	3	.8
	Total	381	100.0
Age	18-30	194	50.9
	31-44	129	33.8
	45&abov	49	12.9
	Total	372	97.6
	Missing	9	2.4
	Total	381	100.0

Marital Status	Single	289	75.9
	Married	68	17.8
	Divorced	5	1.3
	Separated	5	1.3
	Prefer not to say	9	2.4
	Total	376	98.7
	Missing	5	1.3
	Total	381	100.0
Occupation	Student	74	19.4
	Civil Servant	59	15.5
	Self-employed	106	27.8
	Politician	27	7.1
	Private Sector	30	7.9
	Job Seeker	79	20.7
	Total	375	98.4
	Missing	6	1.6
Total	381	100	

Source: Field work, 2021.

Table 3 above reveals that 52.2% of the respondents are males while 47% are females. Those between the 18-30 years' bracket make up 50.9% of the respondents which implies that most of the respondents are in their youth while those between 31 - 44 and 45 and above make up 33.8% and 12.9% respectively. The percentage of respondents that are single is 75.9%, while those that are married are 17.8%. The divorced and separated make up 1.3% each while those who choose not to disclose their marital status make up 2.4% of the respondents. Students make up 19.4% of the respondents, 15.5% are civil servants, 27.8% are self-employed, 7.1% are politicians, 7.9% work in the private sector while job seekers make up 20.7%. From table 3 above It can be deduced that the combined percentage of students (19.4%) and job seekers (20.7) make up 40.1% of the respondents while the self-employed tag along with their 27.8% percentage. This shows that the majority of the population (67.9%) is made up of the unemployed and the self-employed.

**Table 4:** Responses on how long the Respondents have Resided in Owerri

		Frequency	Percent (%)
Valid	<5years	149	39.1
	>5years	195	51.2
	Total	344	90.3
Missing	System	37	9.7
Total		381	100.0

Source: Field work, 2021.

Table 4 reveals that 51.2% of the respondents have resided in the area of study for more than five years. This is similar to the responses gotten from some of the interviewees who pointed out that the long-time span is because they are indigenes of the area and some were equally born there. In the words of one respondent:

*"I am from the Njemanze Royal Dynasty of Amawom, Owerre Nchise in Owerri Municipal and have resided in my village all my life." (28 years old Male, Owerri Municipal)*

**Table 5:** Responses on if the Security Challenge has Affected the Economic Activities in Owerri

		Frequency	Percent (%)
Valid	Yes	356	93.4
	No	24	6.3
	Total	380	99.7
Missing	System	1	.3
Total		381	100.0

Source: Field work, 2021.

Table 5 reveals that 93.4% of the respondents have a general consensus that the security challenge witnessed in the area of study adversely affects economic activities. Those interviewed were equally in agreement citing a regular incidence of attacks of "unknown-gunmen" which resulted in abandoning of farming activities, people running helter-skelter, the upturning of traders' goods in the process most times, loss of lives and property as well as both the government and self-imposed curfews which cause residents to come out for their businesses late and go home early as well as restricting them from not stepping out on some days. A female interviewee in Owerri North had this to say:

*"Every Monday since June of this year (2021) has been observed as mandatory IPOB stay at home. No business activity takes place on those days. The whole place seems like a dead zone without any human or vehicular movements. Businesses that attempted to open on those days have had their businesses attacked and burnt off. On some other days that we venture out to do our businesses, we encounter shoot-outs between "unknown-gunmen" and the security operatives which leaves us running for safety. It has not been easy engaging in any economic activities in my area" (45 years old Female Trader in Orji Owerri North L.G.A)*

**Table 6:** Responses on Whether the Security Challenge has Negatively Affected Respondents' Income Earnings

		Frequency	Percent (%)
Valid	Yes	351	92.1
	No	25	6.6
	Total	376	98.7
Missing	System	5	1.3
Total		381	100.0

Source: Field work, 2021.

There is a general consensus that the security challenges negatively affected the income earnings of the residents of the area of study. 92% of respondents attested to this. The majority of the interviewees were equally in agreement. An Akara seller interviewed in

Eziobodo in Owerri West stated that she has never experienced the type of low income earning she has experienced within this period of study before since she started her business over ten (10) years ago. In her words:

*“I have had to run for safety on numerous occasions leaving my goods behind which I come back to find upturned and destroyed. Due to the insecurity situation, I no longer do business in the evenings because as early as 6pm you hardly find anyone on the streets, people have all gone home for safety. This has greatly affected my daily earning, causing me to eat into my business money and living in a very poor state”* (39 years old Female Trader in Eziobodo, Owerri West L.G.A)

**Table 7:** Responses on Whether the Insecurity Situation has Resulted in Increase in Price of Commodities

		Frequency	Percent (%)
Valid	Yes	372	97.6
	No	6	1.6
	Total	378	99.2
Missing	System	3	.8
Total		381	100.0

**Source:** Field work, 2021.

Table 7 shows that 97.6% of the respondents agree that there is an increase in the prices of commodities. The interviewees are equally in agreement. One of the interviewees, a staff of one of the universities in Imo State was lamenting bitterly. In his words:

*“The insecurity in Owerri has caused hike in prices of goods attributable to the fact that movement is restricted so goods don’t come into town as before causing the traders to pay more to be able to have the goods and in turn increase the prices of the goods to make up for all additional expenses. Salaries now are now no longer enough to take care of expenses.”* (55 years old Male Public Servant in Owerri Municipal L.G.A)

**Table 8:** Respondents’ Opinion on the Strength of the Relationship between Insecurity and Pauperization of the Residents of Owerri

		Frequency	Percent (%)
Valid	Very Strong	163	42.8
	Strong	172	45.1
	Weak	22	5.8
	Very Weak	14	3.7
	Total	371	97.4
	Undecided	10	2.6
Total		381	100.0

**Source:** Field work, 2021.



The majority of the respondents (87.9%) agree that there is a strong relationship between insecurity and pauperization of residents of Owerri while 9.5% of the respondent feel the relationship is weak.

**Table 9:** Respondents Response on Whether the Attack on Police Formations, Especially Police Stations has Influenced the Attitude of the Police in Handling the Crises

		Frequency	Percent (%)
Valid	Yes	312	81.9
	No	56	14.7
	Total	368	96.6
Missing	System	13	3.4
<b>Total</b>		<b>381</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field work, 2021.

Table 9 shows that 81.9% of respondents believe that the attacks on the police have influenced the attitude of the police in handling the crises. The same views are expressed by the majority of the interviewees. According to one of the interviewees:

*“The type of barbaric treatment meted out on residents of my area in Naze by security operatives during this period is unheard of. Innocent citizens walking along the streets are harassed, arrested, detained and some even killed for no reason at all. People are living in perpetual fear as the people who are supposed to be protecting them have turned to become the ones maiming them.”* (42 years old Male Trader in Naze Owerri West L.G.A)

**Table 10:** Respondents’ Response to Whether the Local Vigilante Groups can help solve the Security Challenge

		Frequency	Percent (%)
Valid	Yes	191	50.1
	No	167	43.8
	Total	358	94.0
Missing	System	23	6.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>381</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field work, 2021.

191(50.1%) respondents are in agreement that involving the local vigilante groups can help in curbing the insecurity challenges faced by people in Owerri. Some of the interviewees are equally in agreement that local vigilante groups can help solve the security challenge. In the words of one of the interviewees:

*“With the way the security operatives handled the situation in Naze, I think the Local vigilante groups are the last hope of the common man for safety.”* (42 years old Male Trader in Naze Owerri West L.G.A)

## 5.2 Test of Hypothesis

**H1:** Insecurity significantly causes pauperization of the residents of Owerri Imo State.

**H0:** Insecurity has no significant cause on the pauperization of the residents of Owerri Imo State.

Table 8 was used to test hypothesis 1.

**Table 11:** Chi Square Test of Hypothesis  
 Insecurity and Pauperization of Residents of Owerri

Response	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Very Strong	163	76.2	86.8
Strong	172	76.2	95.8
Weak	22	76.2	-54.2
Very Weak	14	76.2	-62.2
Undecided	10	76.2	-66.2
Total	381		
$X^2 = 366.15, DF = 4, P > .05, X^2_{crit} = 9.488$			

As evinced by the table above, a chi-square goodness of fit test was performed to determine whether insecurity causes pauperization of the residents of Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. The result shows that insecurity causes pauperisation of residents of Owerri, Imo State, which is a rejection of the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ).

## 6. Discussion of Findings

Table 5 shows that 93.4% of the respondents agree that the insecurity situation has affected the economic activities in Owerri. Businesses and farming activities (the mainstay of most Owerri West and North) have been abandoned because of fear and attacks by bandits, kidnapping and rape. This is in tandem with the report of Nkwopara (2021) that most business establishments in Owerri municipality and the adjoining communities are no longer open for business before 9am. Furthermore, Nkwopara (2021) attests that most shop owners, close for the day and start heading home between 4.30 and 5pm for fear of bandits, herdsmen, kidnappers, armed robbers or unknown gunmen. You will not be far from the truth if you call it a self-imposed curfew.

The responses in Table 6 show that 92.1% of the respondents agree that the security challenge has affected the income earnings of residents of Owerri negatively. This conforms with Shettima's (2012) assertion that the loss of man-hour in public and private establishments because of condensed working hours as well as the government and self-imposed curfew as a result of insecurity have equally greatly affected both public and private workers including local economic operators such as akara, suya, bread vendors and market women who make out their living on a daily basis. Apart from commerce, manufacturing activities and engagements in the real sector are further distracted by insecurity and this affects Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The negative implication of these on both individual savings and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Nigeria cannot

be over emphasized because it further aggravates the current high rate of poverty with more effects on crimes and insecurity. As long as it is to make ends meet, 'any way is a way' for the poor who becomes hopelessly desperate and throws righteousness, decency, and in fact morality into the wind by becoming aggressive and engaging in all sorts of crimes - stealing, killing, robbery and all other social vices. This has been adequately captured by our theoretical framework - the relative deprivation theory - which projects that a breach between projected and accomplished wellbeing results in cooperative dissatisfaction fuelled by the frustration-aggression mechanism. Thus, the systemic failure or structural defect in a given society (in this case insecurity) is significantly connected with frustration and aggression as a result of loss or reduction of income and may prompt criminality and violence leading to yet more insecurity. Thus, while insecurity negatively affects income leading to poverty, poverty on its part equally leads to criminality and violence thus indirectly to insecurity.

Insecurity to Poverty and back to insecurity as shown with the cyclical effects illustration below:



depicts a cause and effect relationship in the long run. Secondly, it brings up a new idea and concept of poverty – cyclical poverty – that is perpetuated by cause and effect relationship ad infinitum (further pauperization).

Almost all the respondents (97.6%) agree in Table 7 that the insecurity has resulted in the increase in the price of commodities which means that the residents now pay higher for goods than before. Rising food prices exacerbate the impoverishment of the residents because it reduces the real purchasing power of households making them unable to afford most of the lives basic necessities. This is in line with the World Bank's assertion that seven million Nigerians have been driven into poverty because of the 22% increase in the price of food (Lain & Vlishwanath, 2021). Since naturally, the poor believe that he would be as hopeless as the dead if he remains complacent to poverty, he will likely seek redress by confrontational means, disobedience to both the government and her laws, violent agitation for change or reform etc. resulting in increased insecurity. Government and investors in the bid to curb the escalating insecurity become engrossed in spending huge sums on averting or combatting it while neglecting people's welfare and the primary essence of governance; the end result is even more impoverishment resulting in further insecurity and the cycle of poverty and further pauperization continues.

The majority of respondents in Table 9 (81.9%) agree that the attack on police stations and formations have influenced the attitude of the police in handling the cases. The report of Amnesty International 2021 that in reprisal attacks, security forces comprising military, police, and Department of State Services (DSS) have killed dozens of gunmen, as well as civilians, in areas where these attacks have been committed attests to that. It is pertinent to note that schools were closed down as a result of the insecurity situation leaving the youth at home and most vulnerable and susceptible to these attacks.

The security operatives who exhibit unprofessional conduct and less concern for the welfare of the residents resort to unlawful detention, torture and most times killing of residents most of whom are the youth at every opportunity they get (for whatever reason or cause). This killing of youth by both militants and security operatives for whatever reasons depletes population and mostly human capital and further causes poverty and pauperization. Thus, there is a need to look inwards and source for a lasting remedy to the problem.

Table 10 shows that 50.1% of the respondents are in agreement that going back to the use of local vigilante groups can help solve this security challenge. This is seemingly in agreement with Omonijo et al. (2017) who aver that the change in the mode of security from informal system to formal and its poor management by their leaders have played a key role in compounding the endemic nature of insecurity in the least developed countries to which Nigeria belongs. Diversion of funds meant for security and development for the wrong uses denigrates the essence of governance and precipitates cyclical poverty.

As Omede (2012) pontificates, the nation's security should include the preservation of the safety of its citizens both at home and abroad and the protection of the country's sovereignty. Thus, Nigeria's security should be based on a holistic view that sees all the citizens not some as the primary beneficiaries of every security and developmental deliverable that the state can offer. Ajodo-Adebanjoko and Ugwuoke (2014) opine that the absence of basic services, unemployment, bad governance and corruption creates an avenue for ethnic agitations and separatism from seeming government neglect and marginalization. The ethnic chauvinism and obvious lack of adherence to the Federal Character principle by the present Buhari led federal government of Nigeria can be said to be fanning the embers of violence and insecurity. This could be adduced as one of the reasons the Southeast and Southwest regions are clamouring for secession and has led to the violence and insecurity witnessed within the regions in recent times. This is evident with the alleged activities of the Eastern Security Network (ESN), the armed wing of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a pro-Biafra group movement, which has been alleged to have caused a lot of mayhem from their attacks in Imo, Anambra and Abia states in Southeast Nigeria. The upheaval led to the destruction of both lives and means of livelihood. In addition to insecurity, it has impeded business investments in the areas, economic growth and productivity, encouraged inflation and unemployment and negatively affected the living standards of the people. Essentially, it needs to be noted that most wars and revolts broke out when the pauperized people are hit by the missiles of poverty.

Ogunkoya (2009) posits that de-pauperization is the act of emancipation of an impoverished person from his hitherto condition of deprivation and inability, into a condition characterized by abundant opportunities and supports for a good and meaningful life. When society changes its orientation in favour of the recognition of the fundamental human rights of the citizens, there will be a renewal of hope for the hitherto pauperized masses. The provision of the basic needs and concern for the general well-

being are the doses for the epidemic of poverty. This is because the various deprivations of the citizens' needs are the antecedents of poverty, while poverty is the antecedent of insecurity. Therefore, the concern of all the people of the world is the alleviation of poverty, which can only be realized by developing a zeal and fervent commitment towards the development of humanity. This is de-pauperization.

## 7. Conclusion

Sadly, and ironically, a nation such as Nigeria regarded as flowing with milk and honey has the majority of the citizens living in abject poverty as a result of insecurity. Nigeria is enmeshed in a firebox of insecurity of formidable dimensions leading not only to scores of deaths of both the innocent and the not so innocent, forcing the entire nation to rue the loss of their loved ones, investments, means of livelihood and absence of safety in most parts of the country as well as resulting in an increase in the population of people pauperised. In Imo State, insecurity manifested in banditry, kidnapping, wanton killing and destruction of lives and property has not only left residents in fear, but it has also significantly increased their level of pauperization. Therefore, there is a need to seriously look into ways of tackling the menace of insecurity and poverty in Owerri Imo State Nigeria while bearing in mind the cyclic cause and consequent relationship between them. This is because implementing interventions to reduce poverty will be a difficult task in an insecure environment where violence looms. Just as poverty impacts on socio-economic and political circumstances of a people, so does insecurity manifest in the different segments of any society where poverty predominates. The continued attacks on institutions, government, human lives and property and the mute silence of government at both federal and state levels conjecture complicity. It is difficult to believe that non-state actors could hold the authorities to ransom for years and the government appears helpless. Government should rescue the masses from this mess and live up to its constitutional roles.

## 8. Recommendations

- There is a need for the government to rise and face these daring dual challenges of insecurity and poverty squarely. This can be achieved by setting up committees to dialogue with parties in the conflict to reach agreements on how to resolve their conflicts amicably in favour of all.
- Academic writers, social researchers, scholars, security experts and consultants should be extensively consulted for plausible recommendations and probable solutions to address this national blight.

### **8.1 Suggestions for Further Study**

There is a need for an in-depth investigation into the remote and root causes of the incessant insecurity upheavals in South-East Nigeria in general and Imo-State (Owerri) in particular with the view of finding a permanent solution to it.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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