



# **The Implications of Food Insecurity, Poverty and Hunger on Nigeria's National Security**

**Emmanuel E. Etim<sup>1\*</sup>, Otu O. Duke<sup>1</sup> and Odey Joseph Ogbinyi Jr<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Public Administration, University of Calabar, Nigeria.*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Political Science, University of Calabar, Nigeria.*

### **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Globally, food and nutrition adequacy are facing critical challenges occasioned by climate change scenarios, sharply rising food demand to falling supply, neglect of investment in agriculture, and high cost of production. All these have serious implications on rising insecurity and conflict-induced instability in many countries. Further, an increasing poverty level among the people is a stress-factor as well as a precursor of violence. The thrust of this study is to examine the implications of food insecurity, poverty and hunger on Nigeria's national security. The relative deprivation theory was adopted to explain the reactions of people when they feel that there is a discrepancy between the 'ought' and the 'is' of collective value satisfaction. Data were generated using secondary sources. The paper argues that reinstalling peace and security in Nigeria can only be achieved through careful identification and proper address of causal factors. The paper recommends, among others; that there should be improved agricultural productivity through the encouragement of research and application of modern technologies.

*Keywords: Poverty; food insecurity; national security; hunger; relative deprivation.*

\*Corresponding author: Email: emmaetim1@gmail.com;

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Issues on food security was brought to lime light in 1974 during the world food conference when it dawned on the government that all nations all over the world need to strategize on how best to improve agricultural production so as to match the per capita needs of the population [1]. From various perceptions, inadequate food supply, due to fall in agricultural production and poor distribution channels, poverty and hunger have been identified as causes of insecurity in many developing countries. Food security has a wide and multifaceted conception that is determined by geographical, socio-economic and biological factors [2,3]. It connotes food availability, food access and food utilization [4,5,6]. At the beginning of the millennium, through the effort of the United Nations, world leaders gathered to seek and decipher a better way of tackling economic challenges in 2015. Their deliberations gave birth to what was known and referred to as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The first and most important goal of MDGs was to eliminate extreme poverty and hunger [7]. Today, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 1 seeks to end poverty in all its forms everywhere. Although MDGs made a lot of positive impacts on the lives of people, one in five people in developing regions still live on less than \$1.25 a day, and there is panic that millions might slip back into poverty if adequate measures are not explored, hence, the need for SDGs. The agenda is set to address food insecurity and national insecurity in its 2<sup>nd</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> provisions [8]. Poverty and hunger continue to be serious problems for many people in most developing countries. More importantly is the multifaceted nature of the relationship that exists between food insecurity and national insecurity.

The issue of insecurity and the need for protection is not a recent development. It could be traced to the era when private ownership of properties first surfaced. Also, what constitute national insecurity as well as its causal factors differs from person to person. Factors that influences our perception about insecurity includes but not limited to our conceptual models, theoretical concepts, world view, traditional background, experience as well as environment. Insecurity has been a highly contestable concept. Scholars like [9,10,11, 12,13] have seen it narrowly from the angle of the inability to protect values previously acquired. Whereas, on a broader note, [14,15] implied that to understand insecurity, its antithesis which

encompasses the military and non-military dimensions as well as the people's well-being must be considered first. Effective security is central to the development of all facets of a Nation. To him, food security is a very important dimension of national security; it refers to a condition where food is available and accessible to all [16]. Accordingly, the Nigerian government, on its own part, has not relent efforts in ensuring national security through several arms procurement, military funding, intelligence gathering enhancement, military capacity building and logistics which is evident in the continuous rise of Defence allocation in the federal budget. However, putting a lasting end to the problems would be to identify and address its causal factors which include poverty, hunger, ill-being and inequality. The importance of these four factors has been reflected in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The thrust of this paper is to examine the implications of food insecurity, poverty and hunger on Nigeria's national security.

## **2. CONCEPTUAL EXPLICATION**

Within the context of this research, some concepts are recurrently utilized. Therefore, in order to ensure adequate understanding of this study, its validity and reliability, the following concepts are clarified.

### **2.1 Food Insecurity**

The term food insecurity can be seen from the angle of shortage in the access to nutritionally adequate and safe food resulting majorly from poverty [17]. It is a product of inadequate consumption of nutritionally adequate food, considering the psychological requirement of food by the body as being within the sphere of nutrition and health [18]. Chronic food insecurity is as a result of lack of resources to acquire and produce food, thereby leading to persistent inadequate diet [19]. A food insecure situation is said to exit when the demand side is not balanced with the supply side [20]. Food insecurity exists when everyone at all times cannot afford safe and nutritious food to preserve a healthy and active life [21,22]. The three pillars surrounding food security include food availability, food safety and food utilization [23]. Departing from the aforementioned, [24] noted further that food security is the antithesis of food insecurity and it exists when all people have social, physical and economic access to adequate, nutritious and safe food to meet their

dietary requirement at all times, for good living. [25,26] are of the view that, a country is food secured when there is access to food in adequate and acceptable quantity and quality, consistent with decent existence at all times for the majority of the population. "Food hygiene and safety should also be given important consideration in order to protect the health of the people" [27]. Sustainable food security exists when all people have social, physical and economic access to adequate, nutritious and safe food to meet their dietary requirement at all times for a productive healthy life at present as well as future life [28].

Food security requires adequate access to basic and nutritious food that promotes wellbeing and protection of every member of the society from malnutrition, hunger and starvation. In the development circle, endemic famine/drought, sudden pest attack on agricultural produce and poor yield from farmlands are threats to food security [29]. Physical availability as well as economic and physical access to food, its utilization and stability are dimensions of food security [30]. To fully understand food security, other developmental questions such as income sources, social protection, changing household structures, rural and urban development, water and inputs, retail markets, nutritional knowledge livelihood patterns, sustainable asset accumulation as well as education must be answered. There is bound to be negative impacts on the ability to identify policies to enhance personal and collective access, if these influential factors are not well understood [31].

## 2.2 Poverty

Poverty is a multidimensional concept which points to lack of access to services, empowerment, assets and income [33]. *It is a situation where a person lacks a certain amount of possession or money* [34]. Poverty includes political, social and economic elements. The two forms of poverty are absolute and relative poverty. The former is the ability to meet one's basic needs which are food, shelter and clothing. This conception remains the same irrespective of location [35]. While the later connotes a situation where people are unable to enjoy a required minimum level of living standards, comparing the level at which others do in the same society. Here, the location is taken into serious considerations [33]. Many people and nations of the world today suffer from chronic poverty [36]. Poverty is unavoidable in situations where there is inadequate attention to human development, agriculture and capacity building. It is a condition where people live on less than \$2 per day. But in real sense, the consequences of poverty exist on a comparative degree [37].

Poverty is characterized by ill being. Ill being implies a state of powerlessness, bad social relationship, insecurity, material lack, and physical weakness. Poor people are those without money and other resources required for good conditions of life, which includes good food, amenities, standards and services, which enables them to function well in their society. Poverty is the inability of people to meet up with expected level of education, life expectancy and

**Table 1. This table shows the numbers and shares of undernourished people by region, 1990 to 1992 and 2014 to 2016**

	Number (Millions)		Regional Share (%)	
	1990-92	2014-16	1990-92	2014-16
Developed regions	20	15	2.0	1.8
Southern Asia	291	281	28.8	35.4
Sub-Saharan Africa	176	220	17.3	27.7
Eastern Asia	295	145	29.2	18.3
South-Eastern Africa	138	61	13.6	7.6
Latin America and the Caribbean	66	34	6.5	4.3
Western Asia	8	19	0.8	2.4
Northern Africa	6	4	0.6	0.5
Caucasus and Central Asia	10	6	0.9	0.7
Oceania	1	1	0.1	0.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1015</b>	<b>842</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: [32]

health [38]. The poor do not involve in making decisions concerning the society they live in [39]. According to [40], there are numerous factors that contribute to poverty. These factors includes inappropriate macroeconomic policies, a pause in human resource development, negative economic growth, low productivities and low wages in the formal sectors, and deficiencies in labour market as a result of limited job growth. There are more factors leading to poverty and these factors can be categorized into ecological, economic, social, cultural as well as political factors [41,42].

Further, in the early stage of human existence, it was popularly believed that God created people with different fortunes. While some were to be wealthy, others were to be poor. Today, poverty is seen as a product of laziness, individual inaction and intelligence [43,44]. There are many ways of conceptualizing poverty [45,46]. As at 2005, it was estimated that about 1.4 million poor people live in developing countries with less than 1.25 dollar a day [47]. Now, considering the exchange rate of dollar between 2005 (₦132 : \$1) and 2017 (₦314.25 : \$1), it becomes obvious the number of people living below poverty line has tripled itself. This is detrimental to the achievement of MDGs [48], as well as SDGs.

### **2.3 National Insecurity**

Insecurity is a highly contestable concept. It is the exact opposite of security and has attracted such common descriptors as want of safety, want of confidence, lack of protection, danger, uncertainty, hazard, instability, trouble, being unsafe, and state of chaos [49]. Insecurity is “the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection.” It refers to lack or inadequate freedom from danger. It is the breach of peace resulting either from individual or corporate illegal activities capable of affecting the lawful economic and social activities in the country [50]. This according to [51] has the tendency of hindering the government economic plans.

Considering national security, the term became popular in the twentieth century, after the Second World War. In the words of [52] tranquility and well-being of a society are the pre-conditions for security, which naturally promotes human capital building. What has now become a rather conventional perspective of national security question centering on the military has equally received academic wash-down from another school of thought who believes that the military

perspective of national security is an all-inclusive paradigm for political analysis, is grossly incompatible with emerging reality. “It is advisable to view security in a state with nationality crisis in terms of contending groups, organizations and individuals, as the prime object of security” [53]. Accordingly, [10] believed that;

“Security can be said to be the protection of values previously acquired. It is a condition where the government is able to adequately provide and protect most cherished values and beliefs, democratic way of life, institutions of governance, unity, welfare and well-being as a nation and people. According to this definition, security involves freedom from danger or threat to a nation’s ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and well-being of its people. This takes into account the significance of human wellbeing in the security considerations of a country especially in a developing country like ours.”

Providing national security for the lives and properties within a sovereign state is a vital social contract between the masses, the government and the state. A secured state allows for human capital development while an unsecured nation allows for easy attacks on the foundation(s) that builds human capital development and promotes the destruction of human capacity of a state [54]. It is “a state where the unity, well-being, values, and beliefs, democratic process, mechanism of governance and welfare of the nation and her people are perpetually improved and secured through military, political and economic resources” [55]. “National security is more than territorial defense and should focus on the physical, social and psychological quality of life of a society and its members, both in the domestic setting and within the larger regional and global system” [56]. Put succinctly, “the tranquility and well-being of a society are pre-conditions for security” [56].

There are several factors that hinder the peaceful co-existence of the Nigerian people. Different violent groups have taken their turns in causing fear, anxiety, death, injury, displacement as well as destruction of the properties in the country. As was noted earlier, national security does not start and end with freedom from danger. Rather, it connotes the ability of government to adequately provide and protect the people’s most cherished values and beliefs, unity as well as their welfare. Therefore, any situation that does not guarantee the aforementioned can be termed ‘security

threat'. In Nigeria, these threats includes, but not limited to, communal crises, ethno-religious crises, political conflict, unemployment, poverty and illiteracy.

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

This paper adopts the relative deprivation theory.

"The theory was first articulated by Stouffer and his colleagues to explain series of unexpected relationships between feelings of satisfaction and ones position in the army. Ted Robert Gurr, a prominent contributor to the relative deprivation theory saw 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 agitation and later violence" [57].

Gurr's definition explains the difference between what people ought to get or their value expectation and what they actually get and so, they are likely to agitate and then revolt when their expectations are not met. This is as a result of the fact that there are other persons who have what they are entitle to and they know getting what they want is realistic and this can only be gotten with employment or use of violence. This is also reflected in Runciman's four preconditions of relative deprivation (of object X by person A):

- i. Person A does not have X
- ii. Person A knows of other persons who have X
- iii. Person A wants to have X
- iv. (therefore) Person A believes that obtaining X is realistic [58].

Deduced from the above, relative deprivation essentially means the feeling of been deprived of what one feels entitled to. The agitation for food security, poverty eradication, improvement of standard of living and the concomitant individual or group violence, robbery, kidnapping, cultism, etc which follows are quintessential cases. The extent of relative poverty, inequality, and food insecurity and the gargantuan individual and group problems resulting thereof in Nigeria have led several scholars to argue that the rationale behind the high level of insecurity in Nigeria could be traced to poverty and other factors relating to unhealthy standard of living and unstable economy. The situation of relative deprivation has led some parts of the country to graduate from peaceful agitation to violent ones,

in an attempt to ensure good standard of living for its people [59]. Food insecurity and lack of amenities for improved standard of living has created a divide in the country, where in an attempt to survive, some regions resort to claiming ownership and control of resources endowed in their areas. It has been argued rationally that if the reverse was the case, where there is a stable economic progress with good living standard and adequate food, there will be little or no need for resource control agitations in any part of the country, as it was in the early Nigeria. Therefore, food insecurity and poverty are issues that require urgent attention.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

A qualitative method of data analysis was used in this study. Data were drawn from secondary sources and analyzed for clarity, most data were gotten from online magazines, journals, newspapers, and books to establish the relationship between food insecurity and national insecurity as well as evaluate the impact of poverty and hunger on Nigeria's national security.

### **3.1 Data Collection Method**

Data for this research were collected through an extensive review of extant literature which focuses on the subject matter. The literature reviewed in this study are of high standard and reputations with data strong enough to explain the variables. Glass, 1976 in [60] noted that 'secondary data review is where you re-analyze data in other to answer the original research question in a better way or an entirely new research question with the same data to produce a good and credible research'.

## **4. THE DEMISE OF AGRICULTURE AND UPSURGE OF FOOD INSECURITY, HUNGER AND POVERTY IN NIGERIA**

Before the advent of colonial rule, in 1900 and the discovery of oil, in the 70s, Nigeria's economy relied majorly on agriculture and was doing very well based on agriculture and trading across the borders of the country. Nigeria had enough food both for the sustenance of it's population and export trade. From the 70s when crude oil was first discovered till today, there have been a diminishing return in agricultural produce as major attention has been directed towards oil exploration and it's revenue generation. The more attention is given to crude

oil, the increase in hunger and poverty. Recently, the problem of malnourishment exists at an increasing pace in Nigeria and many other countries of the world [61]. From agricultural exporting nation, Nigeria is now listed among the major importers of finished agricultural products. Nigeria remains a net importing nation, spending about 1.3 billion on importing food items annually [62]. Further, [63] observed that food security problem in Nigeria is pitiable as more families face increasing level of malnourishment as the day goes by. The central bank of Nigeria posited that Nigeria is yet to reach self-reliance and sufficiency in productivity [64]. Food demand has out-grown total supply, and has attracted global attention [65].

Apart from the discovery of crude oil, other man-made factors contribute to the poor agricultural outputs which have given rise to poverty and hunger in the country. These factors include but not limited to ethnic and religious conflicts, policy inconsistency and corruption [66]. While "lack of attention in agriculture brings poverty and hunger, poverty and hunger reduces people's strength to work hard to increase productivity, hence they resort to other means to cater for their food needs. Food and agricultural productivity is both capital and labour intensive" [66] and the Nigerian government is not taking things for granted, as efforts have been directed at restoring agriculture to its former status before the oil boom [24]. Currently, agricultural output in terms of its contributions to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), could be regarded as evidence of increased concern for commitment to food security. Bello elaborated further on this, stating that Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS); Root and Tuber Expansion Programme; FADAMA Development Project; Community-Based Agricultural and Rural Development Schemes; and provision of infrastructures; among others, are food security initiative launched by the government to address food insecurity in Nigeria. Irrespective of these, poverty and hunger persists in Nigeria, why? First, policy inconsistency and corruption in the system; For instance, the 2003 initiative in rice by the Obasanjo administration did not yield much result owing to lack of sustainable backup to the initiative [67]. Out of about N182.2 billion earmarked for the programme, only about N5 billion was released as take-off grant [24]. Second, poor allocation to agricultural sector; agriculture is yet to enjoy a good amount allocated to it from the Federal budget. The highest the sector has received is about seven

percent in 2008 budget [24]. The economic recession faced by Nigeria and the poor agricultural output has left a large percentage of its population in extreme poverty and hunger. It is worthy to note that poverty is not extremism and violence in itself; however, it (poverty) leaves people susceptible to it (extremism). For instance, Boko Haram crisis in the Northern part of Nigeria has intensified food insecurity in the North on the one hand. While many members of the sect are people who have lost touch with proper means of livelihood, living in extreme poverty and are looking for available means of survival on the other hand.

## **5. THE NEXUS BETWEEN FOOD INSECURITY AND NATIONAL INSECURITY**

Food insecurity has been seen from the area of limited access to nutritionally adequate and safe foods due to lack of resources (poverty). A situation where people are unable to acquire for themselves the kind of nutritious food they would love to eat at a given point in time. Extreme poverty and hunger predisposes the mind to negative thoughts. The human mind at that point becomes vulnerable to evil. Going by the relative deprivation theory, the tension that develops from a discrepancy between the 'ought' and the 'is' of collective value satisfaction disposes men to agitations which results in violence. This explains the actions of the people when it seems or it is obvious that they are not getting what they deserve. The UN, FOA and other international organizations have been consistent in their contributions to the fight against food insecurity, stressing the need for adequate food supply to all, because World peace would be achieved when, at least, the 'basic needs' of people are met.

There are preconditions of relative deprivation. It begins when person A does not have X, person A knows of other persons who have X, person A wants to have X, therefore, person A believes that obtaining X is realistic. Believing that X is possible when a person does not have the lawful means of acquiring X explains aggression resulting from deprivation [58]. Hunger and poverty explains to a greater level deprivation. From the Marxist perspective, the society has been divided into two classes. Marxist theory projects what the society would look like when the government focuses its attention majorly on the rich and ignore the plight of the poor. Though he talked about class consciousness and

struggle from the economic perspective; the social, physical and psychological aspect of the struggle cannot be ignored. Being deprived from what a person believes he is entitled to, especially food security and improved standard of living, at many instances could lead to violence or threat of violence. As was mentioned earlier, poverty is not violence in itself; but is potent enough to lead to agitations that can result to violence. A person that is faced with severe hunger can do anything to put food on his table, it therefore becomes less surprising if he resorts to violence just to gain access to his needs, survive or cause his envied person some pains to be sure that it isn't just him who is in a pitiful situation. Moreover, no wealthy person with adequate food supply would key in to unexplained suicide booming. So, there is much to do regarding the provision of basic amenities, healthy food, water, etc in timely and adequate supply.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This study examined the implications of food insecurity and poverty on Nigeria's national security. It concluded that reinstalling peace and security in Nigeria can only be achieved through careful identification and proper address of the causal factors. It has been observed that the disaster caused on the Nigerian economy by the activities of hungry and frustrated youths is enough to be concerned about. The demise of agriculture, due to over-concentration on crude oil, has left Nigeria with increased cases of malnourishment, hunger and poverty. Today, food demands have grown faster than total supply, and have attracted global attention. From the relative deprivation theory's perspective, there is tension that develops from a discrepancy between the 'ought' and the 'is' of collective value satisfaction. This discrepancy disposes men to agitation which results in violence. This explains the susceptibility of the poor and hungry to violence and crime. Hence the urgent need to revive the agricultural sector, return to classical governance (which provides adequately for citizens' well-being) as well as create more jobs for the youths.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The issue of food insecurity should be tackled through improved agricultural productivity, which is a function of adequate research and application of modern technologies.

2. Agricultural policies, plans and programmes should be participatory. Farmers and agriculturalist should be involved in decisions making when it concerns Agricultural policies.
3. The fight against corruption by the Muhammadu Buhari Led Administration should be embraced by all, and it should cut across every sector of the economy, offices and persons irrespective of religion, cultural and political affiliation, for the sake of restoring accountability and generating funds from other sectors to improve the agricultural sector.
4. The Nigerian government should focus more on agriculture than depend solely on crude oil. This will enhance rapid attainment of food security in the country.
5. Nigeria should key in to the SDGs which seeks to ensure environmental sustainability by monitoring the activities of oil-multinationals in oil producing communities to ensure that environmental hazards caused by oil spillage are reduced to the barest minimum.
6. As the fight against terrorism and insurgency continues in Nigeria, the government should develop strategies to combat poverty and hunger which make youths susceptible to joining bad groups.
7. Recent attacks by herdsmen on rural farmers in some parts of the country should be addressed immediately. This will reduce the tension faced by unarmed farmers in these regions.
8. There should be constant sensitization programmes at grass-root levels to inform the youths on the need to stay away from violence and embrace peace, no matter the level at which they believe they are deprived. However, this is possible only when the government makes adequate provisions to address inequality and marginalization in the system.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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