

# **SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION AS PANACEA TO INSECURITY AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS IN NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

Nigeria being Africa's most populous country with abundant mineral resources is faced with various security and economic challenges. The paper attempted a critical examination of the security and economic problems in Nigeria via secondary data. Three factors are identified as the problematic trio that causes insecurity in the country which are; unemployment, poverty, and corruption. The relevance of social studies in curtailing these problems is appraised. Social studies education is indeed the most integrated of all the subjects at the primary and secondary levels of education that inculcate in learners the spirit of togetherness where cherished norms and values are transmitted to another generation. It also equips learners with adult economic roles and emphasises on entrepreneurship. The paper recommended that government should intensify its fight against corruption and also create more entrepreneurship centres across the country and reverse its over dependence on large imports of finished goods. This trend would create employment for the youth which will reduce poverty and idleness with their attendant security repercussions.

**Keywords:** Insecurity, Economy, Unemployment, Poverty and Corruption.

## **Introduction**

Nigeria, having a land mass of about 923,768 km<sup>2</sup> with abundant mineral resources, and a population of over 200 million inhabitants, has all the potentials for development at her disposal (Kazi, 2007). However, intermittent conflicts around religious supremacy and dominance, in addition to their recurrent ethnic manifestations which later culminated into a civil war, have evolved since the colonial epoch, resulting in distinct outcomes that threaten not only the security of the citizens but the continued existence of the country as an integrated unit.

Security challenges in any nation constitute threat to lives and properties, hinder business activities and discourage local and foreign investors which invariably slow down economic growth and development. The issue of corruption is a great threat to Nigeria's

development because it undermines good governance and democratic processes (Agbekaku et al., 2016).

Unemployment is one of the monsters confronting the country today. Nigeria like other countries in Africa faces the challenge of youth unemployment (Odunuga, 2015)

This paper attempt to assess this phenomenon in a bid to portray the relevant role Social Studies education can play in curtailing the problems of insecurity and economic redundancy.

## **Insecurity and Economic Problems**

Insecurity is a feeling of inadequacy and uncertainty that often produces anxiety about one's goals, relationships and ability to handle certain situations (Awojobi, 2014; Tella, 2015). The issue of insecurity has different dimensions such as job insecurity, social insecurity, economic insecurity, territorial

insecurity, and many others. However, in the Nigerian context today, whenever insecurity is mentioned people refer it to the prevailing state of insurgency, sporadic attacks by ethnic militia, banditry and other forms of social upheavals the country is witnessing. There are a lot of security challenges facing the country which include armed robbery, insurgency, tribal conflicts, cattle rustling and recently banditry and kidnapping, which turn to be a cankerworm that seriously needs to be given adequate attention by the Government at all levels. Security is one of the fundamental needs of human society and the state is liable for providing security for members of the public. Wherever a state fails in this regard, the state is considered to be a weak state.

In Nigeria trivial and primordial sentiments deter people from addressing the problems of insecurity objectively. Tella (2015) opined that, when the issue of kidnapping started in the Niger Delta areas by the Militants targeting mostly expatriates, an average Niger Delta man would believe that it was about resource control, while majority of the other Nigerians and northerners in particular believed that it was a southern affair. But today, the issue of kidnapping has become a commercialized and lucrative venture that gradually spread across northern Nigeria luring young people into the nasty business which threatens the socio-economic well-being of the populace.

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

Ali (2013) attributes the causes of insecurity in Nigeria as traceable to the economic crisis in the early 1980s and the emergence of ethnic militia. As a consequence, the emergence of these groups set the stage for terrorist violence in Nigeria, more especially as some of them turned militant and aggressive. Since that time, the state of insecurity in Nigeria continued to deteriorate. The country witnessed the Maitatsine religious crises in Kano in 1980, followed by sporadic attacks in Maiduguri, Yola and Gombe, and later to ethnic upheavals

of the Tiv-Jukun, Zangon-Kataf, and Jos religio-ethnic crises to the emergence of the Boko-Haram Movement which started in Borno and Yobe states.

The continued state of insecurity threatened the very fabric of national integration in the country and created the ecology of fear, disquiet and anxiety, it has also jeopardised developmental activities and retarded economic development. However, some commonly identified causes of insecurity include corruption, unemployment and poverty.

### **Corruption**

Corruption according to Daramola (2020) is a social phenomenon which manifests in various human actions such as deceit, wickedness, selfishness, moral degradation, bribery, embezzlement of public funds or property, etc.

According to Transparency International (2021), Nigeria ranks 154 out of the 180 countries and territories in the 2021 Corruption Perception Index (CPI). Corruption is a widespread phenomenon and its effects are immeasurable. It leaves an economy with an untold hardship exerting adverse consequences on the economic, political and social spheres either directly or indirectly. The direct costs of corruption may be high in terms of lost revenue or funds diverted from their intended use, while the indirect costs manifests in terms of the economic distortions, inefficiencies and waste resulting from corrupt practices (Rotimi et al, 2013). The alleged misappropriation of funds meant for the purchase of arms by some government officials and military personnel has exacerbated the problem of insecurity in the country. The issue of corruption in Nigeria has become institutionalized thereby translating into wider economic, political and social inequality. These inequalities between the people in rural and urban areas in Nigeria or even between people living within the cities is remarkably high which according to conflict

theories can be a potential cause of social crisis.

### Unemployment

Tella (2015) define unemployment as situation when people are not engaged in meaningful work and are lacking the basic necessities of life. Invariably, there are other reasons why people engage in criminal activities, however one cannot rule out the fact that corruption leads to unemployment and idleness which may lead conflicts and conflicts to insecurity. Many Nigerian youths have become preys to terrorists and are easily radicalized. In the Niger Delta region for instance, unemployed youths were the ones employed in the armed conflicts between Multinational Oil Companies and militants while many of such unemployed youth in the North-East find succour in the Boko-Haram sect. As Adegbam (2013) rightly opined that, as the rate of unemployment continues to rise, so also the wave of crimes and its attendant effects. The Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2021) reported that unemployment rate rose to 33.3 per cent in 2021. Of this number those within the age bracket of 25-34 were highest at 28.8 percent of the labour force.

These unemployed people resort to illegal activities such as kidnapping, robbery, electoral violence, assassinations, and other fraudulent activities as a way of making a living. The mob action of IPOB in the South-east, activities of the Niger-delta militia, and the success of Boko-Haram leadership in luring the Youths with money are resultant consequences of unemployment.

### Poverty

Poverty simply refers to lacking enough resources to provide the necessities of life such as clean water, food, shelter and clothing. Every country has its own measure for poverty hence is seen as a multi-dimensional concept classified into absolute and relative poverty. According to World Bank International poverty line, absolute poverty is classified as those living below

US\$1.90 per day. In a report (World Bank, 2021) there are 82.9 million Nigerians living below the poverty line in 2018 which accounts to 40.1% of the population.

There are varied opinions in the academic circle regarding the notion that poverty breeds insecurity. Some scholars believed there is a direct link between poverty and insecurity as argued by the Marxian school of thought (Omonijo et al (2017). Whereas, others argued that insecurity is caused by other factors such as ethnicity, political instability and resource control (Tella, 2015; Kanbur 2007). However, despite the paradigmatic position one takes, empirical evidence suggests that chronic poverty and inequality breed conflict, ill feelings and insecurity.

Looking at the available evidence from the Conflict perspective, there is a strong correlation between poverty and insecurity. Proponents of this school argue that economic grievances, conditions and trends are often important factors in civil conflicts including conflicts among ethnic groups. They further emphasise that poverty generates desperation and/or anger which in turn cause violence. Awojobi (2014) posits that recent academic findings support the claim that, poverty and the lack of income can be the potential causes of insecurity in Sub Sahara Africa. In concordance with this assumption, Sanusi (2017) opined that poverty, economic inequality and unemployment are the root cause of violent conflicts.

However, this theory has been criticised as weak in the face of reality because a great majority of humanity has lived and is still living in poverty without resorting to rebellion. Therefore, poverty in itself may not be the sole causal of insecurity even though a strong correlation has been established. In a study conducted by Collier and Hoeffler (2002) on the incidence of civil wars in Africa, a strong interrelationship was found between income level and the occurrence of violence. The study assumed that unemployed youths find succour as members of armed gangs that

engage in looting, smuggling and illegal mining, as the case in many African countries. This is evident in the Nigerian case where youth in the Niger delta engage in illegal looting of crude oil causing oil spill that is detrimental to the environment, as well as those who engage in kidnapping for ransom which has now become a serious menace in the North-western part of Nigeria.

### The Scope of Social Studies

Social studies education revolves around the development of common set of understanding, skills, attitudes and actions among all members of society. Social studies education is indeed the most integrated of all the subjects at the primary and secondary levels of education. This is so because, it is only by deriving and integrating its contents and learning experiences from a variety of disciplines that social studies can attempt to foster this understanding. As presented in Ololobou (2007) social studies education emphasises;

- 1- Historical issues where learners are exposed to the accumulated knowledge of the past to gain understanding of the present so as to prepare for the future.
- 2- Socio-cultural issues where cherished norms, values and practices are transmitted to another generation.
- 3- Economic issues and the ability to utilise limited resources amidst unlimited demand and equip learners with adult economic roles.
- 4- Political issues which concerns government and its institutions for learners to be abreast with governance, law, justice and equality.
- 5- Scientific and technological issues to assist learners understand the systematic applications of scientific knowledge to solve practical problems of living, as well as adapt life's changes.
- 6- Citizenship education where learners are equipped with the basic skills which emphasise human dignity as they operate as members of the family, school,

community, nation and as members of the global community.

- 7- Contemporary public issues such as peace, human rights, HIV/AIDS education, drug addiction etc as it affects the well-being of man. This is to help learners develop survival skills and participate as well as contribute in national development.

Social Studies Education is a discipline whose main thrust is centred on the study, analysis and understating of man and his environment. It focuses on developing a sympathetic appreciation of the diversity and inter-dependence of all members of the local community and the wider national and international arena. These have been proved to be possible only in an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity. For Social Studies to achieve this role of promoting effective culture of peace in human societies, its theme should be hinged specifically on the culture of the people (Aghulor and Iwegbu, 2010).

Social studies as a discipline, is aimed at the production of functional and effective citizens through citizenship education. It allows the learner to the opportunity to appreciate the positive aspects of our national life. It employs the use of concepts such as empathy, honesty, sympathy, tolerance, rationality, mutual respect, decision making, interaction, independence, morality, co-operation, obedience, adaptation, loyalty, patriotism, authority, values, critical thinking, progress and rule of law under a democratic society. Looking at all these moral concepts, it is quite clear that social studies have a role to play through its objectives of ensuring peace and security in Nigeria. If properly and effectively taught, social studies education can help solve or curtail the problems of insecurity which has an adverse bearing on the nation's economic well-being.

Similarly, social studies education can be properly utilised to provide a solution to the nation's problems of integration, it aims at inculcating national consciousness, national unity, social values and skills which serves as



constituents for nation building. Through social studies education learners are prepared to develop mutual respect and shun ethnocentric sentiments. This will invariably help citizens of different ethnic backgrounds live in harmony with one another. It is hoped that through social studies education citizens can develop critical thinking ability for practical social life. It will help in promoting political literacy and encourage democratic values and principles in the society so as to develop positive attitudes towards nation building.

Social studies education inculcates in the learners the spirit of economic self-reliance which demands that people apply their knowledge and skills to the resources at their disposal. With positive attitude and related skills, the problem of redundancy and unemployment will adequately be addressed.

### Conclusion

This paper, assess the causes of insecurity in Nigeria and its consequent repercussions on socio-economic well-being of the populace. The paper identified poverty, corruption which breeds inequality and unemployment constitute a threat to the security of Nigeria. Unemployment leads to poverty, and poverty creates insecurity. The paper brought to the fore the objectives of social studies education as enshrined in its curriculum and presented it as panacea to the prevailing security challenges as it inculcates

in learners the spirit of patriotism and mutual coexistence.

### Recommendations

This paper recommends the following;

- 1- There is need to expand the social studies curriculum and made compulsory at all levels
- 2- The government has to discourage the problematic indigene status dichotomy which can be accomplished through citizenship education.
- 3- The Government should improve standard of living of the people through creation of more entrepreneurship centres across the country and reverse its' over dependence on large imports of finished goods. Such trend would create employment for the youth which will reduce poverty and its attendant social problems.
- 4- The Federal government should improve the standard of living of the people in the areas most affected by violence which led to massive destruction of basic infrastructure. In this regard, the establishment of the Niger-delta and the North-east Development Agencies is commendable. What remains is for the government to ensure transparency and accountability.
- 5- The fight against corruption should be intensified through good legislation, stiff penalties and an independent judiciary.

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