



SECURITY CHALLENGES ON DATA COLLECTION AND GATHERING IN SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH IN NIGERIA: MITIGATING ITS IMPACT

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Abstract:

Undoubtedly, Nigeria's security architecture has been marred by various challenges, which includes insecurity. These activities range from insurgency, kidnappings, conflicts between herders and farmers. This paper examined how insecurity has adversely affected data collection and gathering process In Nigeria with its overall negative implications on socioeconomic development. Through an in-depth cross-examination of secondary sources of data, books, journals and online materials, this study shed more light on critical issues while adopting the revisionist theory of national security as its theoretical framework to holistically and comprehensively analyze these glaring security challenges and their far-reaching impact on data collection and gathering in the domain of social sciences research. Locally, socioeconomic interaction has remained under siege as a direct consequences or unabated spate of insurgency, robbery, kidnapping etc. In the international scene, images of Nigeria's insecurity as portrayed in various media has continued to discourage foreign investors and hamper influence of foreign investments into country. Findings established have deluged that, the process and quality of data collection has been large affected as a result of insecurity which makes it difficult for committed researchers to access relevant sites and physically locations to secure first hand and reliable data, that will continue to support objective research results and conclusion in social sciences. The study emphasized on the need for the Nigeria government to take a non-politicized approach in addressing the incessant security concerns and upholding synergy among the various arms of local security agents, while showing unprecedented commitment rewards the elimination of corruption in war against insecurity. This will go along way to assist the enthroning and creating the right research environment for the collection of valid data which can inspire development-oriented socioeconomic policy.

Keywords: Security, Insecurity, Data Collection, Insurgency, Social Science.

1.1 Introduction

The term "security" holds diverse interpretations across various contexts. It may be perceived as safe guarding against danger, violence, fear and deprivation which can jeopardize the holistic development. Security entails the absence of fear and deprivation (Baldwin, 2017). The strategic importance of Nigeria as a country stems from the abundant human and materials resources, therefore establishing it as a stronghold in Africa. However, this prominent position has not shielded Nigeria from security threats, as distinct challenges have emerged across various regions. At this juncture, it is paramount to state that, the significance of the symbiotic relationship between security and information collection cannot be overemphasized. The alarming surge in insecurity, including activities of Fulani herders, Boko Haram insurgencies, armed robbery, kidnapping etc have widely spread across all the geopolitical zones of the giant of Africa. The nation has been grappled by insecurity and is facing a dire situation characterized by a decline in economic, social, political, religious affairs which is an indicative of pervasive insecurity.

Nigeria, due to its rich cultural diversity, and economic potential, contributes significantly to the field of social science. However, Nigeria is also faced with an avalanche of security challenges that have far-reaching consequences on various aspects of the nation's development including data gathering in social science (Adeleke, 2013).

These challenges have not only resulted in the loss of lives and properties but have profound implications for research and data collection in social sciences. Okoro, (2018) gave a detailed insecurity situation in the northern part of Nigeria, when he noted that herders have seized entire communities, kidnapping senior state men, burned down churches, killed church priests and other brethren, killed policemen, raped, robbed and committed terrible crimes The government has done little to stop the situation, which is a serious threat to national security and national development. One of the fundamental pillars of the



social science, is collection of reliable and valid data to support evidence based research and policy making. According to Egbetokun et al (2022), data gathering serves as the foundation for understanding social phenomena, analyzing trends and formulating effective strategies to address societal issues. However, the prevailing security challenges in Nigeria have posed significant obstacles to the data collection process, hindering the progress and quality of social science research. Egbetokun et al (2022) noted that, researchers in social science face numerous of hurdles arising from a tempestuous climate when attempting to collect data in insecure environs. These challenges include: limited access to researchites due to safety reasons, threats to personal security and well-being difficulty in obtaining informed content from participants the risks of data loss or damage and the overall disrupted of research activities (Gierszewski, 2010) Consequently the security challenges have compromised research findings reliability, validity, generalizability, undermining the credibility and impact of social science research in Nigeria.

The security challenges in Nigeria have significantly affected the data gathering process in the social science (Abudullahi and Anazodo, 2018). The limitation impose by insecurity have stalled the collection of valid data compromising, the credibility of social science research. Understanding the depth of these challenges and exploring potential solution is essential to ensure the social science research in Nigeria remains robust and impactful.

By addressing the influence of security challenges on data gathering, researchers and policymakers can contribute to evidence based decision making, effective policy formulation and the overall development of the nation.

The study explores the influence of security challenges on data gathering in social sciences. In Nigeria, focusing on the identification of specific challenges researcher face, establishing consequences of data credibility while exploring efficient strategies to mitigate its impact.

The objectives of the paper are:

1. Identify the security challenges faced by social science researchers in Nigeria
2. Identity how these security challenges make the process of data collection and its validity on data collection in social science domain
3. Highlight strategies to mitigate the impact of security challenges

1.2 Research Methodology

The researcher herein employed the use of secondary data by, exploring relevant books, journals, newspaper and the internet to divulge the specific challenges encountered in data collection due to security issues. The paper sheds light on an under-researched area, filing a gap in knowledge and understanding.

1.3 Literature Review

The security architecture in Nigeria have severe implication for data collection and gathering in social sciences and other field of discipline as the case maybe. These fall back to the fact that, researchers and scholars have limited access to relevant sites to access reliable and valid data. |when there is threat to life also poses a threat to other things.

Using Nigeria, entire regions may become inaccessible due to conduct on-the ground research (Peace and Baibier, 2000). On the other hand, the atmosphere created by insecurity has continued to hamper the consistency of data collection process. The process of data collection is not one to be done hurriedly because, it often require longitudinal studies as vvel I as repeated visits overtime. However, as insecurity continue to disrupt this long process, this led researchers to alter data collection leading to the collapse of the fundamental values of social sciences.

Additionally security challenges can directly alter research infrastructure. Research institutions sites may suffer damages which may led to the destruction of reliable and valid data hindering the efficacy of data gathering in social sciences. To address this menace, researchers, scholars must adopt innovative strategies to gather data in insecure places. These include: leveraging on technology online surveys, phone interview to sideline physical limitations, partnership with local organization and communities can foster this.

1.4 Discussion of Findings

Nigeria has witnessed and is still witnessing political tribal and ethnic crisis in different regions. Others include human trafficking, unknown gunmen among others. Each region in Nigeria has cases of insecurity peculiar to it, for instance, the Northern region has witness several cases of Fulani herdsmen



clashes with farmers, Boko Haram insurgencies which has led to both the loss of lives and properties as well as displacement of many who are in profound despair of returning to their ancestral lands. Eastern region is obviously at the mercy of unknown gunmen, kidnappers etc. The West on the other hand, have continue to experience ritual and kidnapping cases. All these put together, has made it almost impossible for researchers to derive the necessary comfort required to get valid data.

The conflict between Fulani herdsmen and farmers has continued to be a thing of national concern. The encroachment of farmlands by Fulani herders has led to clashes, resulting in loss of lives, destruction of properties farmlands as well as destruction of properties (Ajibefun, 2017). The root causes of these clashes could be attributes to both economic and religious reasons with herdsmen claiming that their cows are killed due to religious reasons while farmers on the other hand perceive the herders as a threat to their economic activities (Ajibefun, 2017). The herdsmen killings have had and continue to have severe socio-economic implications and have disrupted inter-group relationships. The unfortunate situation is considered the second most significant insecurity issue after the Boko Haram insurgency (Okoro, 2018). Olakutan (2016) noted that, the herdsmen use of sophisticated weapons which is a no match to the crude implement of farmers have, pose a grave dangers to security including security personnel such as police and the military.

Additionally, the inequality in wealth distribution and unemployment among youths and corruption among politicians has led to an increased rate of poverty (Ucha, 2002). This in turn leads a lot of youths to involve in kidnapping and ritual killings. It is strongly believed that, the government unresponsiveness and lackadaisical attitude about the poor economic condition of youth has pushed a majority of them into crime. The perpetual existence of these crimes have continue to erode security stability and reduces economic activities as well as adversely affecting intergroup relationship in the country.

1. The causes of security threat in Nigeria are numerous. Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria (CLCN, 2019) however identify the following as the root causes of insecurity:
2. Break down of cherished cultural values: cultural values link the community with their ancestors and with God. The value of the sacredness of life helps to show all attitude contrary to the promotion of human life and otherwise.
3. Religious intolerance and ethnic conflict: Effiong (2019) also identifies the following factors of religious intolerance, devotion of one's religion, value conflict, psychological jealousy etc. which independently and influencing actions throughout the history of security by challenges emanating from religious intolerance
4. Poverty and Unemployment: Effiong (2019) opines that Nigeria faces severe poverty, unemployment etc. This ,makes unemployed young folks the devil's workshops, committing crimes and creating security problems.
5. Greed and selfishness: Just like Thomas Hobbe's state of nature, people only seek satisfaction their own interests. There is no rules of conduct beyond personal gain and satisfaction
6. Unrestricted flow of deadly weapons: there is a sudden proliferation of weapons in the polity. The use of weapons among youth to run cult groups, kidnapping and armed robbery Syndicate is on an increase which creates security challenges to the nation. Others include, injustice, ignorance of God's command etc.

1.5 Mitigating the Impact

There are several ways to curb and mitigate the impact of security challenges. Importantly, tackling the root cause will help formulate crucial strategies to reduce its impact:

The following are ways of mitigating its impact,

- i. The promotion of good government cannot be overemphasized. This is the fundamental foundation to address security challenges. A good government should be responsive to the needs of the people, accountable, transparent to the polity. All these could be achieved if the standard of governance is raised higher than what it is now.
- ii. The promotion of a fair justice system that will uphold fairness and shun corruption, selective prosecution, nepotism, tribalism and a culture of impunity while restore truth and integrity at full throttle.
- iii. Addressing the rate of unemployment is also important in mitigating security challenges. Joblessness contributes a great deal to personal hardship, social unrest and crime. The government Should partner with the private sector to create more employment opportunities to



- boost productivity, individual livelihoods leading to social stability.
- iv. Proper training and provision of sophisticated weapons for security personnel should not be left out. As this will enhance their efficacy in combating insecurity challenges in the country. Strengthening neighbourhood watch should also be encouraged to prevent crime rate in streets and remote areas.
 - v. Developing strategic media initiative is another effective strategy. This involves purposeful communication to counter the negative exhortations of social media platforms by extremists. The government can establish defence websites, radio and raise public awareness. By denying these extremists a vice and targeting their secret supporters as well as gullible fellows for their activities can be hindered.
 - vi. The government should heavily leverage on the use of modern technology to track extremists e.g. unknown gunmen, Boko Haram and other crime perpetrators. This involves the use of advanced drone, GPS etc.

Conclusion

Succinctly, the influence of security challenges on data collection and gathering in social sciences in Nigeria is a critical problem that hampers and impedes the development of the country. This is because, upon the gathering of valid and reliable data, strategies and efficient initiative, could be formulated to address societal issues and formulated policies. This paper argues that, until the various security challenges researchers are faced with are addressed, without levity and the implications of research as well as policy formulation and societal development will continue to be of great concern.

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